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HOW SOUTH ASIANS ACHIEVE IN EDUCATION:
A Comparative Study of Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis
in Birmingham Schools and Colleges

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A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The educational achievements of South Asians have been shaped by economic, social and political developments in the post war history of British race relations. Social class background of individual students and the school effect have been shown to be the major determinants of achievement but the precise characteristics of differences at the ethnic minority sub-group level have remained uncharted. In addition, past research has primarily relied on large-scale quantitative methods to develop comparative knowledge of South Asian educational performance.

This research is an attempt to understand wider variations of difference in the educational achievement of South Asians. The research is unique as it explores differences between Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani groups, additionally distinguished along lines of social class, ethnicity and gender. Six schools, three of which were selective and three comprehensive, and three further education colleges, were used to obtain samples of South Asian pupils and students. The methods used in this study were principally qualitative. Face-to-face in-depth interviews with school pupils, parents and teachers accounted for the main part of the empirical research, which was also supplemented by a survey of college students and a survey of teachers.

The research explored the achievements, aspirations and motivations of pupils, students and parents to analyse educational life histories, interpreting and evaluating differences between South Asian groups by social class, ethnicity and gender, as well as religion and culture. Teachers were interviewed and surveyed in order to determine their perceptions of and actions in relation to South Asians in education. Altogether, 137 respondents (89 school pupils, 25 parents and 23 teachers) were interviewed by the researcher and 176 respondents (109 college students and 67 teachers) participated in the two postal surveys (313 altogether). Questions asked were about secondary school entry, 13-plus subject choices, GCSE and A level achievements, and potential higher education entry.

It was found that all South Asians that entered 'effective' schools performed competently. Furthermore, the factors which led to the positive educational outcomes for Indian (Hindu and Sikh) groups were oppositional to those which led to the educational underachievement of South Asian Muslim groups and, here, rather more Pakistanis than Bangladeshis. The educational success of Indian groups was attributable to educational norms and values relative to social class. The educational experiences of Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were problematic, largely because of factors in their lives outside of school: such as the limited education and occupational levels of parents, parents' inadequate understanding of the education, and insufficient use of English within the home. Teachers interviewed from the sampled schools and colleges were inclined to advocate positive approaches for managing issues relating to South Asians in education.

In conclusion, therefore, it is argued that the educational achievements of South Asians in schools and colleges in Birmingham are closely related to social class background and the school effect. Factors associated with religion and culture are more likely to affect South Asian Muslims. The increasingly competitive nature of the education system has led to a divergence between South Asian groups: with Hindu and Sikh Indians (including some East African Asians) firmly established as educational 'successes' and Pakistani and Bangladeshi South Asian Muslims, in contrast, routinely considered as educational 'failures'.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.



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22 November 2000

ABBREVIATIONS

BEIC	Birmingham Economic Information Centre
CEBP	Careers and Education Business Partnership (Birmingham)
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
ERA	Education Reform Act (1988)
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualification
HMSO	Her Majesty's Stationary Office
ILEA	Inner London Education Authority
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LEA	Local Education Authority
LFS	Labour Force Survey
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PCAS	Polytechnics Central Council on Admissions
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UCCA	Universities Central Council on Admissions
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
YCS	Youth Cohort Study

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the study

In Britain, the educational achievement of ethnic minority groups and in particular South Asians¹ has attracted considerable academic and policymaker interest in the post war period, 'but despite the volumes of evidence' it remains difficult to 'draw firm conclusions' about the *processes* of achievement (Tomlinson, 1991, p. 121).

This study is an attempt to determine the processes behind the educational achievements of South Asians in differing schools and colleges in the city of Birmingham. A large city in the West Midlands, England, Birmingham has had many ethnic minority groups settling in the post war period (Back and Solomos, 1992). It has been referred to as the city which purposely ghettoised ethnic minority groups, 'Sparkbrook became a largely Pakistani area, the Handsworth area became the Caribbean centre of Birmingham, alongside the Soho area which was overwhelmingly Indian' (Rex, 1987, p. 104). It is also historically significant as it is the place where the late Enoch Powell made his 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968.

The city has periodically been a location for academic study in the field of sociological research on ethnic minority groups (Rex and Moore, 1967; Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; Ward, 1983) and has always remained an important 'test case for the future of race relations in British society' (Back and Solomos, 1992, p. 329). Furthermore, Birmingham City Council Education Department has been since 1982 committed to a 'strong multicultural/antiracist/equal opportunity perspective', with

¹ The term South Asian refers to people who originate from Bangladesh, India or Pakistan. The term East African Asian includes people that arrived from such nations as Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania before entering Britain, but are broadly of Indian subcontinent origin.

equality of education considered high priority (Coles, 1997, p. 12). Therefore, to evaluate the experiences of South Asians within this wider framework, the city of Birmingham provides a fruitful location in which to situate this study. The variables of social class, ethnicity² and gender are explored in order to discover the way in which they affect the wider economic, social, religious and cultural contexts in which Birmingham South Asians are institutionalised in educational settings.³

The development of the central hypothesis in this study is founded on a review of relevant academic literature in the field of sociology of education and research on the educational experiences of South Asians in particular. The *raison d'être* for this research stems from a desire to discover the reasons for educational performance differences between varying South Asian groups.

This introductory chapter evaluates the economic and social positions of South Asians in Britain and in Birmingham. It also outlines the structure and summarises the composition of the study. The first part of this chapter presents an historical analysis of the economic and sociological processes of migration that have led to the current settlements of South Asians in Britain and in Birmingham. It attempts to identify the

² It is argued that 'race' has no biological foundation as it is based on a socially deterministic attempt to reify hierarchical relationships between those that hold power and those that are subservient to it (Miles, 1982; Bulmer, 1986). The development of racial categories around phenotypical and skin colour characteristics was to essentially legitimise the imperialisation and colonisation of distant lands for the greater accumulation of capital through exploitation (Greene, 1970; Marx, 1978; Runnymede Trust, 1984; Banton, 1987). In this study, the term 'ethnic minority group' and 'ethnic minorities' are used to refer to differing non-white groups in British society, namely those who have settled as economic migrants from the Caribbean and South Asia. Nevertheless, the essential determinants of racism are still prevalent in society and the negative features of 'race' and racism need to be considered *a priori* in any sociological study of 'race' and education (Carter and Green, 1996). See also Back and Solomos (2000) for an excellent updated reader on the theories of 'race' and racism.

³ It is important to note that the idea of educational underachievement itself needs conceptual clarity as does the notion of educational achievement, particularly in relation to assessing differential levels of scholastic performance (Plewis, 1988; 1991). Educational sociologists define underachievement in relation to groups or individuals that perform at levels below an overall mean (Burgess, 1986a).

characteristics of communities of South Asian origin within the host society to determine the nature of their ethnicisation. It is an exploration of how South Asian groups have settled across the country and in Birmingham and formed different residential and occupational patterns.

1.2 Ethnic minority labour migration in the post war period

It is important to trace the early developments of African-Caribbean and South Asian migration to Britain; how immigrants were absorbed into the labour market at the onset (Phizacklea and Miles, 1980; Fassman and Münz, 1992; Cheng and Heath, 1993), together with the implications for ethnic minority groups in present day Birmingham. It is important to explain the early periods of ethnic minority migration and the reaction of the government, as well as charting the relative progress made in the occupational and residential mobility of ethnic minority groups.

During the period 1945-1951, the Labour government of the time implemented policies that were essentially economic in nature. The end of the Second World War, however, left Britain short of domestic labour to meet demand. Workforce scarcity was also common to a number of other western European economies at the time; for example, France and Germany. British policy, on the other hand, differed from the other European nations because it failed to capitalise on initiatives to exploit migrant labour for the specific purposes of domestic economic expansion. Realising that newly recognised British citizens from the Caribbean and South Asia would make Britain their home, the restriction of net migration effectively hindered economic growth. The Labour government, in essence, reduced the inflow of foreign labour to meet domestic political concerns. It was regarded by one sociologist as a 'paradox' (Miles, 1989, p. 426). The government of the day demonstrated a preference for 'aliens' rather than

British citizens. The *modus operandi* was 'grounded in the fact that British citizens from the colonies [could not] be deprived of the freedom to commodify their labour power in the way that aliens would' (*ibid.* 1989, p. 440). As a result, 'there was a strong preference for white European workers' (Joshi and Carter, 1984, p. 56). The political and ideological driving forces underpinning the approach towards immigrant labour remained hidden from the public at large.

Analysis of first generation economic migrants and their labour market experiences found all ethnic minority groups experienced an 'ethnic penalty', including East African Asians, who were well qualified in comparison to other ethnic minority groups. Nevertheless, it was African-Caribbeans, Pakistanis, and the Irish that suffered greatest. Indians, Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans all suffered 'very substantial ethnic penalties, even after controlling for their age and education... discrimination along the lines of skin colour is likely to be an important part of any study' (Cheng and Heath, 1993, p. 196). In addition, a 'racial division of labour' ensured African-Caribbean and South Asian workers were kept apart and so prevented from organising together as part of a wider struggle,

...racialism did not debar black people from work per se. It co-operated to deskill them, to keep their skills down, to keep their wages down and to segregate them in the dirty, the low paid jobs that white workers did not want – not on the basis of avowed racism but in the habit of an acceptable exploitation.

Sivanandan, 1982/3, p. 112.

The economic recession of the late 1950s reduced the need for labour. By then, local communities and national institutions had already developed outward hostility towards ethnic minority groups. It was also that case that ethnic minorities were concentrated in

inner city areas, living close to the working class white⁴ indigenous inhabitants, who had not made their way out of the locality through 'white flight'. Ethnic minority groups were perceived by the host society as 'troubling coloureds' that took resources away from the state without contributing to it; 'contrary to the commonly held view... "race" as a problem had already been essentially structured by 1951' (Joshi and Carter, 1984, pp. 69-70). Reaction on the part of the white indigenous working classes was based on a belief that ethnic minority workers would leave once their employment had terminated. Rarely was it imagined or indeed intended that ethnic minority groups would remain, forming communities and becoming established over time.

In many senses, in Britain, as was the case for a number of other advanced western European economies, ethnic minority labour immigration, originating invariably from once-colonised lands, filled a gap at the bottom of society (Castles and Kosack, 1973). Ethnic minority immigrants were effectively placed in the 'low[est] echelons of the labour market' (Dayha, 1974, p. 83) and regarded by the host society as a pariah workforce, which was periodically ethnicised in the sphere of capitalistic accumulation. These workers were recruited into those industrial sectors most in decline and, as such, their positions in society were located below the white working class. The latter was able to move up socially, progressing their economic positions from lumpenproletariat to bourgeoisie. It has been argued by Rex (1988), that in effect, an 'underclass' formed beneath the white working class, consisting of African-Caribbeans and South Asians

At the beginning of the 1960s, the number of immigrants entering Britain from South Asia was at its height (Rose *et al.*, 1969). Towards the end of the 1960s, however, immigration from South Asia had all but ended. Both the peak in 1961-1962 and the

⁴ The term white refers to people of a Anglo-Saxon descent. The term is occasionally interchanged with ethnic majority.

decline in 1968 were the result of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) followed by the Commonwealth Immigration Act (1968). The 1962 Act changed the pattern of South Asian migration; rather than male pioneers, it was their wives, children and fiancées that came, with many South Asians from India and Pakistan seemingly rushing in an attempt 'to beat the ban' created by the Act (Deakin, 1970, pp. 47-9). Subsequent amendments to the original 1962 Act in 1968 led to wider restriction of immigration from New Commonwealth countries and on each occasion the move was affected by the politicisation of ethnic minorities in Britain (Solomos, 1989; Castles and Miller, 1993; Miles and Cleary, 1993). As a consequence of change to legislation, the South Asian settlement became more permanent and family orientated (Anwar, 1979; Modood, 1991).

Based on further economic restructuring, technological investment and de-industrialisation over the last four decades, economic and social divisions between rich and poor have continued to widen (Massey and Meegan, 1982; Harrison and Hart, 1993). Over this time, certain South Asian groups have achieved upward economic and social mobility, living in more affluent areas, working in professional occupations and becoming successful entrepreneurs throughout Britain as a whole (Robinson, 1990; 1996; Srinivasan, 1995; Modood *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, at the end of the twentieth century, through continued economic restructuring and the internationalisation of capital and labour, there are still many ethnic minority groups that are trapped at the 'wrong end' of the labour market and it is there that they continue to remain.

1.3 Ethnic minority groups in Britain and in Birmingham

A series of demographic and labour market indicators are used to reveal the current positions of ethnic minorities in Britain and in Birmingham. Although the 1991 Census

was conducted a decade ago, it nonetheless remains a comprehensive source from which to obtain key information on ethnic minorities.

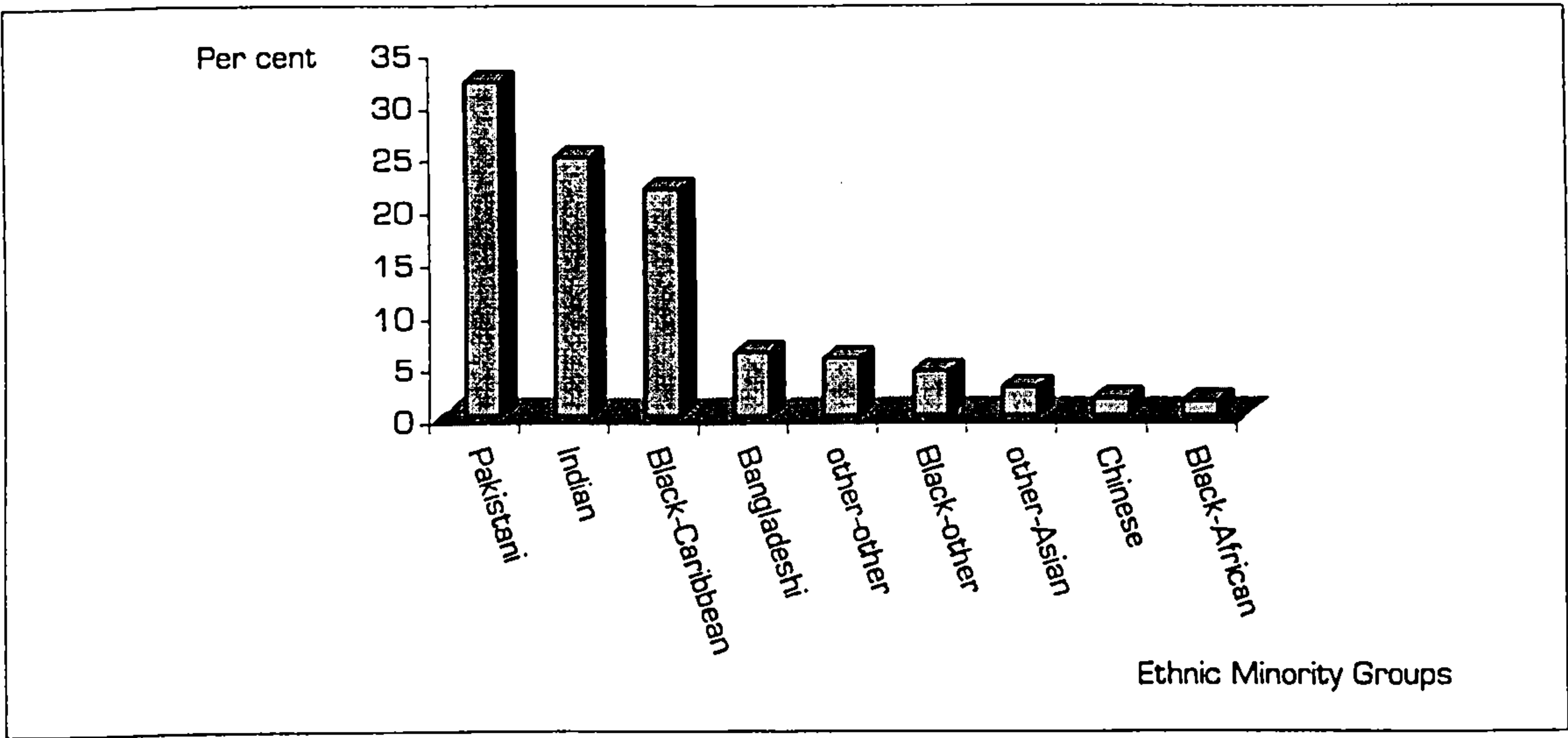
First, it is important to emphasise the significance of regionalised and local sources of information on ethnic minority groups such that in some concentrated localities it is misleading to categorise the ethnic groups as minorities. Moreover, at the local level, it is also important to recognise the relatively mature population structure of groups such as the Indians and the African-Caribbeans in comparison to younger Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups. Men and those living in inner city areas are the most likely to be undercounted because of difficulties in relation to the collection of various data (Green and Owen, 1995). There is also a need to remain cautious of Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates, as ethnic minority respondents are less likely to take part and are more likely to fail to answer certain questions. Indeed, the 1991 Census was likely to have underestimated the ethnic minority population by around 11 per cent (Owen, 1993, p. 22).

In the West Midlands, immigrants settled in the 'zones of transition', which were being increasingly vacated by more mobile Britons experiencing 'white flight' (Rex and Moore, 1967). Subsequently, these areas became more impoverished with new employment created elsewhere and in other economic sectors (Owen and Johnson, 1996). At present, ethnic minority groups are concentrated in various inner city areas in Birmingham forming 'the middle ring' (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979). Although the 1971 Census showed second-generation ethnic minority groups, especially South Asians, preferred to remain within the same communities (Saifullah-Khan, 1979; Anwar, 1998), two decades later, the 1991 Census also showed second and third generation South Asians largely preferred to locate within the same geographical locations as their parents (Ratcliffe, 1996; Phillips, 1998). This trend is argued by Robinson (1996) to be a

function of the younger generations wishing to continue the religious and cultural traditions of the generation before them as well because of negative experiences found in the labour market.

The 1991 Census revealed the largest single ethnic minority group in Britain was Indian (1.5 per cent), followed by ‘Black-Caribbean’ (one per cent). Pakistanis accounted for 0.9 per cent and Bangladeshis 0.3 per cent of the population in Britain. There are, however, regional variations to consider. Approximately half of all ethnic minority groups were found to be located in Greater London (44.8 per cent). It contrasted with only ten per cent of the population in Greater London being white in origin. In 1991, the West Midlands contained nine per cent of the *all* white population, compared to 14 per cent of *all* ethnic minorities. Specifically, the West Midlands contained 19 per cent of all Indians, 21 per cent of all Pakistanis, 16 per cent of all ‘Black-Caribbeans’, and 11 per cent of all Bangladeshis in Britain, as reported by the Birmingham Economic Information Centre (BEIC, 1993). Figure 1.1 below shows the relative proportions of ethnic minorities in Birmingham based on the 1991 Census (BEIC, 1993).

Figure 1.1 Ethnic minority population in Birmingham [1991]



Source: adapted from 1991 Census

The 1991 Census found Birmingham contained seven per cent of all ethnic minority groups in Britain. Twenty-two per cent of the city's population was of ethnic minority origin with nearly twice as many South Asians in comparison to African-Caribbeans. Pakistanis constituted the largest single ethnic minority group comprising seven per cent of the total population of the city. Furthermore, 57 per cent of Birmingham's ethnic minority population was found to be located in seven of the city's 39 wards (i.e., Handsworth, Soho, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, Small Heath, Sandwell and Aston). It was further ascertained that almost half of the city's African-Caribbean groups lived in six wards (i.e., Handsworth, Soho, Aston, Ladywood, Sandwell and Sparkbrook). Over 70 per cent of South Asians were found to be living in eight wards (i.e., Aston, Handsworth, Sandwell, Small Heath, Soho, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill, and Washwood Heath). In particular, Indians were found concentrated in the Handsworth area, with Pakistanis in Small Heath, Sparkbrook, and Sparkhill. Bangladeshis were found mainly in Aston and Sparkbrook. The Chinese were found to be dispersed in Birmingham as they are elsewhere in Britain (Mason, 1995).

In addition, the 1991 Census showed that in Britain as a whole, 55 per cent all ethnic minority groups were British-born. In Birmingham, over half of Indians and Pakistanis were British-born in contrast to 60 per cent of Birmingham's Bangladeshis that were born overseas. Ten per cent of Birmingham's Indians were born in East Africa. Table 1.1 below shows the age structure of Birmingham's ethnic minorities in 1991. Forty-four per cent of the South Asian population was below the age of 17, including 36 per cent of Indians, 49 per cent of Pakistanis and 55 per cent of Bangladeshis compared to 21 per cent of the whites. Young South Asians accounted for a significant part of each South Asian group population, as well as of the total population of the city.

Table 1.1 Birmingham population by age [1991]

Ethnic Groups	0 < 4 (%)	5 < 9 (%)	10 < 14 (%)	15 (%)	16 < 17 (%)	18 < 24 (%)	25 < 39 (%)	40 < 59 (%)	60 < 74 (%)	75 + (%)	Males	Females	Total
White	7	6	5	1	2	10	21	23	16	8	361,585	392,689	754,274
Pakistani	14	15	14	2	4	14	19	13	4	0	33,742	32,343	66,085
Indian	9	11	11	2	4	14	25	18	5	1	25,562	25,513	51,075
Black-Caribbean	8	9	7	1	2	13	28	21	11	1	21,522	23,248	44,770
Born in Ireland	0	1	1	0	0	3	13	44	32	6	18,347	18,943	38,290
Bangladeshi	15	16	15	3	6	11	15	15	4	0	6,491	6,248	12,739
Other-Other	21	18	12	2	4	12	20	9	3	1	5,900	5,624	11,524
Black-Other	24	19	13	2	4	15	20	3	1	0	4,226	4,577	8,803
Other-Asian	11	13	10	2	3	13	27	17	3	0	2,846	2,807	5,653
Chinese	7	7	6	2	4	18	31	18	5	1	1,710	1,605	3,315
Black-African	9	10	8	1	2	13	31	19	6	1	1,521	1,282	2,803

Source: adapted from 1991 Census

Birmingham unemployment rates were also found to be significantly varied in 1991. Unemployment amongst 'Black-African' and South Asian men was nearly double of white men. Unemployment among South Asian females was more than three times of white females. The highest rates of unemployment were among Pakistanis and Bangladeshis; with 35 per cent of Pakistani males and 45 per cent of Pakistani females, and 42 per cent of Bangladeshi males and 44 per cent of Bangladeshi females unemployed. At the time of the 1991 Census, the average unemployment rate for the city of Birmingham was 14 per cent. South Asian unemployment rates were up to three times the norm for the city.⁵ Furthermore, the 1991 Census also confirmed Bangladeshis were the least likely to own a motor car, the most likely of any group to experience household overcrowding and the size of family tended to be greatest (i.e., Bangladeshis averaged six, Pakistanis five and Indians four).

At the end of September 2000, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) unemployment rate, used by the present government, was 4.3 per cent for the West Midlands as a whole and in Birmingham it was 9 per cent (12.4 per cent men, 4.6 per cent women). Table 1.2 below shows that in the wards with greatest ethnic minority numbers, unemployment rates were up to three times as high. Although the table below is ranked in order of highest population as determined by the 1991 Census, it shows persuasively ethnic minority groups, invariably in this case African-Caribbeans and South Asians, experience much higher unemployment rates in comparison to the citywide average. It begins to develop further the rationalisation of how groups experience economic and social exclusion; because they are more likely to be

⁵ A specific feature of the ethnic minority unemployment is that it tends to be 'hyper-cyclical' (Jones, 1993, p. 112). Nevertheless, it is found that even at times of economic boom, unemployment rates for ethnic minorities continue to remain high.

unemployed and more likely to live in deprived inner city areas in comparison to whites.

Table 1.2 Unemployment in Birmingham by ward [September 2000]

Ward	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)	Population 1991 Census [000s]
Small Heath	19	9	15	31,609
Washwood Heath	18	7	14	28,219
Soho	21	9	16	28,099
Aston	30	11	22	26,819
Sparkhill	19	10	16	26,269
Sparkbrook	29	13	24	25,893
Ladywood	23	8	17	24,712
Nechells	25	11	20	22,848
Handsworth	25	9	18	21,660
Birmingham	12	5	9	961,044

Source: adapted from BEIC (2000)

Table 1.3 below shows the ethnic minority population in Britain in 1996-1997. The table shows how young ethnic minority people formed the major part of the overall ethnic minority population figures.

Table 1.3 National population by ethnicity and age [spring 1996 – winter 1997]

Ethnic Groups	Under 16 (%)	16- 34 (%)	35- 64 (%)	65 + (%)	All ages [000s] (%)
White	20	27	37	16	53,000 (95)
Indian	27	32	36	5	900 (1.7)
Pakistani	38	35	24	2	600 (1.1)
Black-Caribbean	23	33	36	8	500 (0.9)
Black-African	30	41	27	2	300 (0.6)
Bangladeshi	42	35	20	3	200 (0.4)
Chinese	17	41	38	4	100 (0.2)

Source: adapted from Pullinger, 1998, p. 34

Recent national Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates made at the end of 1998 continued to indicate the variability of economic activity between ethnic minority groups. For males, economic activity rates for ‘Black-Caribbean’ (at 82 per cent) and Indian men (82 per cent) were almost comparable to white men (at 85 per cent). Bangladeshi and Pakistani economic activity rates were both at around 70 per cent. The Chinese had the lowest rate of economic activity at 65 per cent. Female economic

activity rates varied even greater. The rates for 'Black-Caribbean' and white females were equal at 73 per cent. The rate, however, for Indian women was 60 per cent, Pakistani 24 per cent and Bangladeshi 22 per cent (Sly *et al.*, 1998). Limited rates of participation for Bangladeshi and Pakistani were due to their lower average age. In addition, lower participation rates were also reflective of the restricted education levels of Bangladeshi and Pakistani women (cf. Brah and Shaw, 1992). Even at the end of 1998, there was further reason to indicate discrimination in the labour market; for example, Black-African males tended to be well qualified but also experienced high unemployment rates. Similarly, the unemployment rates for ethnic minority groups in the top four social classes were on average more than twice of white groups (Church and Summerfield, 1996).

1.4 Economic and social development of South Asian communities

The historical developments leading to the migration of South Asian groups needs to be further expanded. It is important to understand how resources such ethnic minority groups were equipped with at the time of initial migration were subsequently mobilised into ethnic communities, exhibiting different economic, social, cultural, family, kin and clan characteristics (Alcock *et al.*, 1979). It is useful to evaluate the nature of South Asian groups in Birmingham through an analysis of community structures and discuss the importance of taking into account religious and cultural differences.

A problematic at first is the identification of such groups not in terms of separated ethnic minority units but as part of the wider notion of 'Black'. Questions of 'political blackness' are important for South Asians as they allow groups to identify themselves differently from 'Black' *per se*, because specific social and cultural needs are dissimilar (Modood, 1988). For South Asians, it is argued the term 'Black' is

disputable as it essentially focuses on the narrower colour racism rather than the broader cultural racisms (Modood, 1994). The latter view is also shared by other sociologists who argue for a greater understanding of 'race' and ethnicity given recent changes in the politicisation of ethnic minority groups in Britain, 'there is a need for greater theoretical clarity and a broadening of the research agenda to cover issues that have been neglected, such as the politics of culture and identity' (Solomos and Back, 1994, p.154). Any theoretical notion of 'race' therefore needs to include the further analytical dimensions of ethnicity, gender and social class to develop a concrete theoretical position on 'race' and 'racism' (Grant and Sleeter, 1986; Penn, 1996).

As was identified from the 1991 Census, and as it is today, Pakistanis are the largest single ethnic minority group in Birmingham. Pakistanis in Birmingham almost exclusively originate from the Mirpur district of Azad (Free) Kashmir (which is annexed to Pakistan). A number of British Pakistanis also originate from the Punjab region of Pakistan but have settled largely in the industrialised inner cities to the North of England (Anwar, 1979; Werbner, 1990), or in the South-East of England. Before migration, many of the Pakistanis in Birmingham lived and worked in rural areas (Ballard, 1994). Families were usually extended, with up to three generations living in one household. The males worked on small land holdings, or in specialist craft-type work, while the females maintained domestic order and looked after livestock (Dayha, 1974). Families lived in close vicinity to each other and were knowledgeable of the affairs of others. The socio-anthropological study of a Pakistan community in Oxford by Shaw (1988) showed how the village-kin network was strong amongst Mirpuris before migration and has remained relatively intact as part of their adaptation to Britain.

Pakistanis first arrived as merchant seaman after the Second World War (which also includes groups recognised today as Bangladeshis) and settled at the English

seaports. Only the males were first prevalent as migrants thought of their stay as merely temporary. After retirement age, younger Pakistani males from the sending regions replaced them. Early Pakistani migration was dependent on this form of chain-migration and, in particular, the remittances of capital back to the sending regions. It was how the very early Pakistani migration process differed to the Punjabi-Sikh and African-Caribbean migration (Dayha, 1973; Bhachu, 1991a). These early Pakistanis worked hard to ensure their existence, as did other ethnic minority groups. Many South Asians had to adapt to the host society in order to survive and it resulted in forsaking distinct cultural and religious traditions and values for more westernised ones (Dayha, 1988).

The Indians in Birmingham, comprising of Sikhs in the main, with fewer Hindus, are more affluent than their Bangladeshi and Pakistani counterparts and are not restricted to the same inner city areas. The Indians tend to be occupationally more mobile and are more likely to be embroiled in entrepreneurial activity. Indians in Birmingham have originated from the Punjab and the Gujarat areas of India; from a combination of urban and rural settings; or even via East Africa. These East Africans have arrived via Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda bringing with them also the acumen for business (Desai, 1963; Mattausch, 1998). Because of this distinction at entry level, Indians have become successful in many economic and occupational spheres. The Indian economic success is also related to struggles experienced in the labour market, leading to self-employment as a form of escape or potential upward mobility (Metcalf *et al.*, 1996). Unlike their white counterparts, certain Indian small business owners are a well-established section of the petite bourgeoisie.

Finally, Bangladeshis in Birmingham are a group almost exclusively originating from the Sylhet region of Northwest Bangladesh. The largest British concentration is found in the deprived neighbourhoods of the East End of London (Eade, 1989). There

are also Bangladeshi communities found in parts of inner city Birmingham (i.e., Aston and Nechells in particular). As with Pakistanis, Bangladeshis live in close-knit communities, with strong local community structures. Increasingly, they too are establishing an entrepreneurial presence as well becoming more organised at the community level. They nevertheless remain essentially impoverished with large families as the norm, with males working in dilapidated industries or otherwise unemployed. Bangladeshis also share with Pakistanis a desire for the Islamisation of second and third generations (Eade, 1990). That is, present day second-generation South Asian Muslims (Bangladeshi and Pakistanis) are increasingly questioning their ethnic from their religious identity (Jacobson, 1997). The nature of Islam among groups is questioned and re-examined in the light of generational development (Modood, 1990; Samad, 1998). Young Bangladeshis experience a similar reality to Pakistanis as the re-evaluation of their individual identity has necessarily involved a return to more literal Islam (Beckerlegge, 1989; Gardner and Shukur, 1994).

Although all Muslims are united by a common religion, a consensus may not necessarily exist inside of communities. There are *bona fide* differences between various South Asian Muslims; in terms of dress, custom, culture and variation in religious tradition and as such organisation. In contemporary Islam, there are three sects; *Shia*, *Sunni* and *Wahabi*. In addition, the *Barelvis*, the *Tablighis* and the *Ahmadiyas* are all variants of Sunni Islam (Robinson, 1988). There is a need, therefore, to remain sensitive of negatively stereotyping British-Muslim groups. Because media capital is in ever more fewer hands, and as a result of capitalistic exploitation and through a xenophobic predilection in some English newspapers, a negative perception of Muslims in Britain has arisen and led to the proliferation of disparaging preformulated value judgements, which to this day continue to be shaped by wider geo-political events concerning

Muslims (Asad, 1990; Ahmed, 1995; van Dijk, 1993; Halliday, 1996; Runnymede Trust, 1997).

In Birmingham, the relatively high number of mosques is part of a commitment to remain in Britain and teach younger Muslims the values and ways of Islam. In certain Birmingham locations, there are specialist goods and services outlets; *halal* butchers, travel agents, clothing stores, fruit and vegetable markets, restaurants, jewellers, bookshops, all owned and managed by Muslims. Such types of ethnic enclave entrepreneurial activity reinforce a sense of community as local businesses are geared to the needs of local people (Zimmer and Aldrich, 1987; Waldinger *et al.*, 1990; Light *et al.*, 1993). It helps further the creation of community groups holding dearly manifestations of religious and cultural value (Joly, 1995; Scantlebury, 1995). These ethnic institutions not only cause the 'relative encapsulation' of 'immigrant allegiance' but they also form a 'deliberate, conscious statement of the role that the community intends or does not intend to play in wider society' (Rex, 1987a, p. 228). These ethnic institutions are a way of making it 'explicit to others... [their]... refusal to adopt local norms or to surrender... [their]... ethnic identity' (Dayha, 1974, pp. 94-9).

Immigrants have arrived and settled in Britain for nearly a thousand years (CRE, 1996). Late nineteenth century South Asians arrived from higher social class backgrounds for the specific purposes of education and business. Although the current South Asian population has the same educational and entrepreneurial intentions, it is drawn, however, from the more impoverished areas in the sending regions of Azad Kashmir in North West Pakistan, the Sylhet region of North West Bangladesh and the Punjab region of India.

Invariably, the principal aim of Pakistanis at the beginning of the 1960s was to generate as much wealth as possible before returning to their countries or regions of

origin, supported by a 'myth of return' (Anwar, 1979). East African Asians arrived later on, essentially because of the Africanisation of former colonised lands by the British in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their economic characteristics were of middle-class and professional positions in the sending societies or places of sojourn and they sought to achieve those very ends in Britain (Clarke *et al.*, 1990). In 1973, Ugandan Asians were forced out of their country and those accepted by Britain were encouraged to settle away from already densely populated South Asian population pockets known as 'red areas' (Rex and Tomlinson, 1979, p. 43). Bangladeshis arrived when severe economic hardship and the desire for family reunification forced many to seek refuge in Britain in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Peach, 1990).

Because of a range of factors affecting the passage of South Asians into Britain, different spatial and occupational patterns have emerged. It is the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis that are more likely to be clustered in inner city areas and more likely to be unemployed in Birmingham. In contrast, the Indians have managed to acquire higher standards of living, accumulated greater economic and social capital and are living in the more affluent areas of the city.

1.5 Research objectives and structure

This study aims to provide new insights into the processes of educational achievement for South Asians. Birmingham is a city much suited to such an exercise, as it is currently home to many ethnic minority and South Asian groups. Since the onset, it has remained a fermenting base for 'race relations' activity. Indeed, profiling the nature of South Asians in Britain and in Birmingham has revealed the significance of population concentrations, labour market participation rates and aspects of community structure and organisation. The question of how the economic and social positions of South Asians

mirror those found in educational settings is at the core of this study. That is, how far do differences in the economic and social realities of South Asians reflect those in education?

The thesis takes the following form. Chapter Two discusses theoretical and policy debates and, in particular, examines existing research in the field. It is important to do this, particularly from the period when South Asians and ethnic minority groups were first thought to emerge as 'problems' in educational settings. It comes to term with the issues that have affected intellectual and policymaking thought on the nature of ethnic minority educational inequality. It discusses the limitations of the use of multi-level regression techniques in questions of educational inequality for ethnic minority groups and argues for an open-ended methodological approach that is qualitative in nature. Chapter Three sets out the methodology of the study. It explains the reasons for conducting the study and the way in which it was carried out. The chapter also reflects upon the data gathering process and expands upon the overall outcomes from interviews and surveys.

There are five chapters containing the empirical data. Chapter Four discusses key processes in the early education of South Asians. Chapter Five expands upon subject choices. Chapter Six highlights the performances of the sampled schools and colleges in relation to the pupils and students sampled to illustrate relative achievements. It assesses the results obtained by respondents and how they shaped eventual higher education entry. Chapter Seven is an assessment of the role the home and the school plays in educational achievement processes and establishes which is significant for different South Asian groups. Chapter Eight focuses exclusively on teacher perceptions towards parents, gender, religion, educational aspirations and policy. In the final chapter, conclusions are drawn and suggestions are made for further research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL AND POLICY DEBATES

2.1 Introduction

The Education Act of 1944 provided a system of education for every member of society based on the principles of meritocracy. Throughout the twentieth century, nevertheless, it is clear that educational success has remained strongly related to social class (Halsey *et al.*, 1980; Heath and Clifford, 1990; Goldthorpe, 1996).¹ It has happened despite the fact that educational policies have been introduced throughout the last three decades to alleviate inequalities.

A review of early post war research on educational inequalities found ‘children from middle class homes were more likely to succeed at school’ because their homes provided them with an environment conducive to learning. Working class homes, on the other hand, lacked fundamental characteristics, particularly if one parent was unemployed. As such, working class children were found to have ‘language inadequacies, visual and perceptual deficiencies, a concrete rather than ideal and concept focused mode of expression, a stress on immediate rather than deferred gratification, a low self-image, modest aspirations, low motivation to academic goals and a restricted attention span’ (Flude, 1974, p. 25).

Since the post war settlement of African-Caribbeans and South Asians in British society, research on ethnic minority groups in education has indicated ‘intellectual capacity, family structures, cultural differences, disadvantage and social background, language problems, low self-esteem and racial prejudice as explanations’ for the

¹ Halsey *et al.* (1980) divided schools into two broad categories, ‘secondary modern’ and ‘selective schooling’, effectively creating two social classes. Such a distinction is useful to draw upon for this study.

educational underachievement of such groups. The general predilection of this research, however, did not adequately conceptualise the relationships between educational performance, government policy and school resources (Tomlinson, 1991, pp.125-6).

The broad thrust of educational policy and research carried out on the educational achievement of South Asians in the post war period is reviewed and evaluated in this chapter. There is first an historical analysis of research conducted on South Asians in education, since the migration of South Asian groups became significant and caused the education system and those involved within it to react in certain ways. The politico-ideological climate in which the educational inequalities of South Asians have been determined is also reviewed. It is followed by the central aim of this chapter, which is to assess the relative merits and demerits of current knowledge on South Asians in education as well as to develop the salient arguments giving rise to the potential for generating further knowledge on the processes of educational achievement for differing South Asian groups.

2.1 Political ideology

2.1.1 A policy of integration and assimilation

For ethnic minority groups arriving in significant numbers to Britain, education was not necessarily their primary concern. It came after housing and employment. At the onset, the number of ethnic minority pupils entering schools was negligible and remained relatively inconsequential for central government and local education authorities (LEAs). As children joined parents during various stages of migration and settlement, difficulties soon began to emerge for pupils and the schools they attended. Early problems included new ethnic minority pupils started intermittently throughout the academic year and consequently upsetting the school timetable. Many also arrived

without a proper command of English, proving to be altogether different problems for schools and their new pupils.

At first, ethnic minority pupils did not easily absorb the culture of the school or mainstream society, leading to tensions, for example, over tradition, diet and dress. South Asian Muslims originating from poorer rural areas were thrust into a vast urban metropolis with a peculiar system of schooling and, subsequently, it was disconcerting for some. In addition, pupils were perceived in stereotypical terms, both by teachers and by other white pupils. Early policy responses were insufficient in dealing with the sensitive issues at hand, particularly in terms of language support. Local education authorities varied in their attitudes towards finding a solution, with some more prepared to tackle issues directly, with others far less demonstrative (Lee, 1965; Little, 1975).

Initially, one of the ways in which central government attempted to address 'the problems' in schools was through actively recruiting teachers to take up posts in areas of severe socio-economic decline. For policymakers, this move was related to the notion that lower ability teachers worked in such areas. The policy of vigorously conscripting teachers, however, backfired when central government found it difficult to attract able teachers. Instead, high numbers of similarly qualified 'poorer' teachers made applications. A further problem was by labelling certain schools as requiring 'special needs' led to teachers in the schools to believe the root of educational inequality rested explicitly in pupils and their communities and not elsewhere (Glennerster, 1972).

As ethnic minority groups first began to appear in schools in increasingly visible numbers, a policy consideration was that potential difficulties with pupils could be eliminated by integrating them into the culture and structure of the school (Rose *et al.*, 1969; Mullard, 1982; Verma and Bagley, 1984). The apparently high number of South Asians at all ages were 'problems for which the education system was not prepared'

(Rose *et al.*, 1969, p. 284). The dilemma faced was thought to reflect greatest on teachers and, as such, their interests were believed to be more important (Grosvenor, 1997). A policy of assimilation was applied to incorporate immigrants groups through adaptation. Ethnic minorities were expected to jettison their own modes of social and cultural behaviour and become absorbed into the school and ultimately into society. Policy attempts were made to incorporate ethnic minorities 'into a relatively homogenous British state' (Verma and Bagley, 1984a, p. 4). The notion that English society was 'a unitary whole, politically and culturally indivisible' was central in this period. It resulted in the recognition of ethnic minority groups in terms of how well they had internalised middle class norms and values. It was a policy of 'institutional racism',² which was controlled at the centre and ranked ethnic minority groups as somehow inferior. Eventual change in emphasis came about when cultural superiority was replaced by cultural tolerance (Castles, 1995). The latter was more flexible and policy began to accept the variability of ethnic minority groups. It recognised the existence of racism in society and how it potentially permeated all aspects of education.

2.1.2 Multicultural education

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, two movements took place in the field of education, namely multicultural education and antiracist education. Each was based on differing concepts of racism in society leading to 'ideologically divergent programmes of educational reform' (Rattansi, 1992, p. 24). The broadly liberal position was associated

² Institutional racism in educational settings is defined as, 'the production of racial inequality in a wide range of institutions by the normal processes of their operation, the irrelevance of the intentions of the personnel involved, the historical developments of racial exclusion and oppression and the interrelationships of institutions, resulting in the cumulative nature of the inequalities' (Williams, 1985, p. 327).

with multiculturalism and Left-radicalism was thought synonymous with antiracism. More liberal than integration and assimilation but drawn from similar underpinnings, multiculturalism assumed a position at the centre ground. Power relations between ethnic minority groups and whites and how they affected education, however, remained unchallenged (Troyna, 1988).

Schools in society were encouraged to introduce multicultural education programmes to reduce inequality by providing both the pupils and their teachers with positive histories and images of ethnic minority groups (Verma, 1989; 1989a). The Department of Education and Science (DES, 1977) green paper entitled, *Education in Schools*, affirmed the multicultural education impetus. Schools and teachers working within them were instructed to learn to appreciate and respect other faiths and cultures to overcome ethnocentric overtones in the curriculum (Verma, 1988). Multicultural education was an attempt to breakdown stereotypes by calling for 'greater tolerance' (Sarup, 1991). It involved the school in creating an appropriate environment where respect would to be given, for example, 'to dietary preferences, dress, custom, religions, and cultural heritage and sensibilities' (Parekh, 1988a, p. 15; Figueroa, 1991; 1995).

In effect, it is argued that multicultural education extended the philosophy of cultural pluralism. Although it was able to reduce racism, however, it was not able to eliminate it. Furthermore, some LEAs were reluctant to promote multicultural education to hesitant schools (Troyna, 1987a). It permitted certain teachers at the everyday teacher-pupil interaction-level to go about undetected; it helped teachers to maintain a 'colour-blind' approach and legitimise the status quo (Troyna, 1985, p. 212).

Multicultural education was regarded by many radical commentators to be 'essentialist' and 'reductionist'. Multiculturalists, it is argued, viewed racism as merely a product of the few. As it was a personality-orientated frame of reference and not

structural, the view perpetuated the socio-pathologisation of ethnic minority groups, (Troyna, 1987; 1993). The problem of educational underachievement was felt to emanate from individuals and not from the workings of society, implying ethnic minority groups possessed deficiencies requiring 'compensation'. As a result, the multicultural educationist programme was seen to be an 'instrument of social control' (Figueroa, 1991, p. 46). By reducing structural issues to cultural, questions of individual empowerment to combat racism were largely ignored.

In reality, multicultural education concentrated on cultural differences between groups rather than structural (Lynch *et al.*, 1992). It gave rise to a great deal of study throughout the 1980s maintaining ethnic minority educational achievement was closely associated with low self-esteem (Verma and Ashworth, 1986; Verma and Pumfrey, 1989). It became increasingly 'fashionable to argue that the educational failure of working class and black children was due to poor self-concept and self-esteem' (Stone, 1985, p. 8). Furthermore, self-esteem was thought to evolve over the entire educational life cycle of individuals and so it was 'culturally grounded', but in addition that it had 'different grounding and different meanings in different ethnic groups' (Verma and Mallick, 1989, p. 154). It was argued that South Asian groups developed a positive outlook despite their disadvantaged positions in society. Parents were also identified as playing an active part in increasing their children's self-esteem by transposing their own values towards education in a positive way.

There are other psychological studies in education, apart from self-esteem, originating from both the USA (Lindgren, 1980) and Britain (Clarke, 1989), which need to be mentioned. Attempts to measure ethnic differences using psychological theories have invariably focused on intelligence. Hereditarians argue intelligence to be genetically determined. Environmentalists argue that environment and test bias are

responsible for differences in intelligence. Studies from the USA have confirmed intelligence quotient (IQ) scores are improved with parental pressure, language development and the provision of general learning opportunities outside of school. Studies of ethnic minority groups in education have shown the importance of home in fostering intellectual achievement (Gage and Berliner, 1992).

It is important, however, to consider the performance of pupils in education based on factors that are specific to the individual as well as to the school, the classroom and the home. Most psychological perspectives attempt to account for the educational process by focusing on one or more of these factors, such as pupil motivation (Fox, 1983). Psychological theories, nevertheless, though useful in some situations, make it particularly difficult to evaluate all the variables affecting the range of pupil performance. For example, in attempting to understand pupil behaviour, a focus is needed on external factors, internal factors and the relationship of emotions to the interactive perspective. Furthermore, in assessing achievement in education, it is important that any evaluation must measure what it is supposed to and it needs also to be reliable (Child, 1993). Therefore, psychological theories of achievement were not used for this study, as it was necessarily set within an economic and sociological context using a qualitative methodological framework for research.

2.1.3 Antiracist education and beyond

It is argued, therefore, multicultural education had merely been successful in 'catering for difference', 'watering down' the curriculum, and 'cooling out' ethnic minorities in education (Troyna and Williams, 1986). Exasperated sentiments felt by radical teachers and ethnic minority intellectuals permitted antiracist education to come into being (Williams, 1986). Antiracist education incorporated further aspects thought to contribute

to racism, 'particularly its historical roots' (Ginta, 1992, p. 96). Antiracists believed all schools were potentially an 'integral part of the generation of institutional racism in society' (Jones, 1986, p. 135). Antiracist education endeavoured to extend attention not just to the socio-pathologisation of ethnic minority groups but also to institutional racism. In specific relation to policy, it attempted to 'deracialise the old curriculum and apply antiracism as part of the syllabus' (Rex, 1987b, p. 10).

Antiracist education, nevertheless, was critiqued for assuming that *all* white groups are party to the educational underachievement of *all* ethnic minority groups. Moreover, the aphorism, 'racism = prejudice and power' was thought to be over simplistic and over generalised. Furthermore, the movement was considered politically motivated and concerned only with racism. It ignored social class as the central issue by focusing instead on radical struggle in education as part of a wider programme to eliminate racism in society. Even for ethnic minority groups, the antiracist education movement lost credibility, especially when the *other* saw it as opposition to racism *per se* (Gilroy, 1990). Furthermore, new forms of cultural racisms differentiating the experiences of African-Caribbeans and South Asians required different types of responses from ethnic minority groups.

The late 1980s and the 1990s have revealed a new agenda in relation to national educational policy, but as the layers of rhetoric are peeled away, it is clear little changed since the mid-1980s. The Macpherson Report (1999) on the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry revealed the extent of institutional racism endemic in an organisation such as the London Metropolitan Police Service. The inquiry was a major landmark in British 'race' relations history, as it brought out into the open the acute extent of structural racism in a particularly large establishment. Although media interest generated by the inquiry report was wide reaching, initial teacher union reaction has been defensive (Richardson, 1999).

Furthermore, at the end of the twentieth century, the problems experienced by ethnic minority groups in society are broadening, such that they cut across a number of equality of opportunity issues; namely, disability and gender. Racism in social settings has required a more inclusive range of solutions (Runnymede Trust, 2000). At the same time, in recent periods, racism in educational settings has revealed itself in more culturalist terms (Short and Carrington, 1996; see also Cole, 1998; Short and Carrington, 1998; Cole, 1998a).

The education system, since the Education Reform Act of 1988 (ERA), has been more concerned with issues of league tables and performance outputs. The move to the educational New Right throughout the late 1980s and the 1990s was also found in the USA (David, 1991). The origins of both were based on the desire by central government to be removed from the workings of the education system so that more would be left to market forces. The education system today bears scant resemblance to the Education Act of 1944. Competition between schools and the centralising of core curriculum subjects has become the norm (Tomlinson and Craft, 1995). It has led to a system riddled with inequalities and the tendencies have been for disparities to deepen and widen between groups. The national curriculum has closely redefined what it is to be a British citizen. It possesses 'a narrow interpretation of our cultural heritage and what it means to be a British citizen' (King and Mitchell, 1995, p. 28-9).

Notwithstanding, some educationists and sociologists have called for a move away from the New Right hegemony in educational discourse (Mac an Ghail, 1995). As the number of school exclusions, particularly for African-Caribbeans, continues to remain high, it is clear discrimination in educational settings remains (Bridges, 1994; Osler and Hill, 1999). The education system and ethnic minority groups have been systematically removed from the current policy agenda at the same time as schools have

been required to deal with other burgeoning pressures. Nonetheless, 'racism has been extending its influence on the lives and opportunities of ethnic minority students' (Gillborn, 1997a, p. 348).

2.2 South Asian educational achievement research

The educational performance of ethnic minority groups has been a consistent area of research over the last four decades. This section of the chapter reviews some of the more salient research carried out and attempts to identify gaps in present knowledge. The first part looks at early studies on South Asians in education, moving to an analysis of the *Rampton Report* (DES, 1981) and *Swann Report* (DES, 1985), both commissioned by central government, before examining the statistical limitations of school effectiveness research, which has been a more recent central government phenomenon. There is also an evaluation of difficulties in relation to the idea of teacher discrimination; the post-schooling (16-18) routes of South Asians; and the eventual move into higher education (18+). These areas are considered pertinent and the questions they evoke help to determine the nature of new research in the area of South Asian educational achievement processes.

2.2.1 Early research on South Asian education achievements

A report on ethnic minority parents, their children, and teachers from local education authorities in Britain in the mid-1970s reveal recommendations relevant to this day. It showed ethnic minority parents had higher motivation levels for their children compared to their white counterparts. Teachers were concerned with the continued underachievement of certain ethnic minority groups but felt disempowered. Teachers believed that the only way to improve their service would be through the assistance of

LEAs. Teachers also urged that improved school facilities were important to alleviate disadvantage, 'very little attention... had been given to the issues which caused the teachers high concern: - a confused identity and under-achievement of a minority of children in the school system' (CRC, 1977, p. 6).

Based on a study of school-leaver examination performance in the early 1970s in the North of England, it was found 'consideration of class cannot explain why the Indians and Pakistanis performed as well as they did. They did well not because they were middle class necessarily but that they had [internalised] middle-class educational attributes' (Taylor, 1973, pp. 438-9). It was also found parent encouragement was directly related to educational success. South Asian economic migrants were thought to have brought with them the 'baggage' of trying to achieve high educational success for their young. The aspiration for their children to educationally achieve would have nevertheless remained, had they not migrated at all or had they migrated to another country apart from England.

Another early 1970s study used a comparative white group to examine South Asian educational achievement processes and further attempts were made to find out more about the apparently close link between educational achievement and parent support levels (Gupta, 1977). It was found certain South Asian groups had 'unrealistic aspirations', which remained ultimately unrealised, resulting in eventual underemployment. Proportionately more of the South Asian boys and girls wanted to remain in education beyond school leaving age; these trends 'replicated Taylor's findings' (*ibid.* p.191). The reason for the greater propensity on the part of South Asians to remain in education was argued to originate from the 'South Asian psyche'. There were in addition other reasons provided; greater continuity in education may also have been associated with a fear of discrimination in the labour market. It must also be noted,

on the other hand, both the Taylor (1973) and Gupta (1977) studies used respondents who had had most of their education overseas and merely completed their compulsory education in England.

At the time, the trend for research was to propose that an instinctive desire to move upward socially resulted in the high importance placed by South Asian parents on their children to perform better than their white counterparts. It was not because of their middle-class status *per se*, rather because of a middle-class orientation towards education. Occupational mobility for working class families was far less than it was for middle class families because 'the aspirations of working class boys are raised in middle class schools and the aspirations of middle class children in working class schools are reduced such that working class children who go to university come from families some significant part of whose economic experience contain characteristics we typically regard as middle class' (Lane, 1972, p. 263). Much of the early research, nonetheless, identified educational underachievement to be 'restricted, in the main, to the low status sector of the community' (Robinson, 1980, p. 149). The sector is essentially characterised by rural born and poorly paid South Asians occupying homes in substandard inner city areas (Driver and Ballard, 1979).

Based on 1981-1982 school-leaver examination data from 250 ethnic minority pupils in 12 Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) multi-ethnic comprehensive schools, a comparison of academic performance with ethnicity and gender was made (Maughan and Rutter, 1986). Analysis of public examination results of all pupils sampled at the end of the fifth year of secondary schooling found performance to be marginally higher for all girls than for boys. The majority of African-Caribbean pupils gained only the lower grades with none gaining the equivalent of 5+ A-C O levels. Few ethnic minority pupils reached the end of their compulsory schooling without at least

some graded results, 'their success by the time of leaving school owed much to their greater involvement and persistence in secondary education throughout, their higher attendance rate during the compulsory years, and their decisions to stay on in larger numbers to take examinations at each possible leaving date' (*ibid.* p. 28).

Therefore, research conducted on South Asians in the 1970s and early 1980s found the educational needs of pupils were largely concerned with their adaptation. Studies of examinations performance showed a higher rate of achievement of South Asians in comparison to others. Reasons for higher the South Asian achievement revolved around the accelerated upward social mobility aspirations of newly settling immigrant groups. They were nevertheless considered incongruous to the social class positions they occupied in reality.

2.2.2 Rampton and Swann: committees on ethnicity in education

The Labour government of the late 1970s commissioned an investigation into ethnic minority educational underachievement, initially to look closely at African-Caribbean groups. After the publication of the *Rampton Report* (DES, 1981), the chair of the committee was replaced by Lord Swann and the remit widened to look at also at South Asians as specific differences were emerging between ethnic minority groups.

Intended to explore the educational experiences of African-Caribbeans, the original 1981 report was critiqued for being an inadequate assessment of factors contributing to the educational underachievement of African-Caribbeans. It was questioned, 'if West Indians are underachieving, are they doing so because the education service is generally inadequate for all children or because it is particularly inadequate for West Indian children?' (Reeves and Chevannes, 1981, p. 36). The *Rampton Report* (DES, 1981) had specifically focused on African-Caribbean children, but due to political

influences it became clear other ethnic minority group experiences in education had also to be understood. The move led to the publication of a further report in 1985.

There were criticisms, however, made of the *Swann Report* (DES, 1985). For one sociologist, the *Swann Report* was regarded 'as an exercise in multicultural education discourse. Even the name was changed to "Education for All" as some teachers in certain LEAs would see that it was no concern to them' (Rex, 1987b, p. 11). It cultivated difference through the maintenance of a core set of common political values (Rex, 1989). It attempted to develop education for all so pupils in all-white schools did not become 'racists' like the generation before them (Klein, 1993).

It was argued that the Swann committee's terms of reference diluted many ideological perspectives. The Left advocated an antiracist agenda scrutinising economic and social structures. The Right demanded identification with a common white-Englishness, where the quality of the school mattered most (Parekh, 1989). The Liberal view believed the early socialisation periods of children were crucial to their educational achievement. It was also indicated that there existed little cohesion in the committee resulting in a diffusion of outcomes. The committee failed to capture aspects of both antiracist education and multicultural education. As one of the former members of the Swann committee reported, 'the terms of reference were not neutral... [They were]... informed by what I might call a social-democratic view of the nature and causes of the educational underachievement of ethnic minority children' (*ibid.* p. 231).

Furthermore, it was established that the *Swann Report* (DES, 1985) contained no reference to eradicating racism in society or to including education against racism. It conformed to the multiculturalist belief in the perfectibility of existing educational structures and the importance of integration into them. In general, the factors of underachievement were thought to originate from essentially an adverse domestic

environment that was not conducive to study. The *Swann Report* (DES, 1985) was also thought not to have considered adequately the factors of social class or gender.

In many senses, the report was argued to be ‘reductionist’ as it did not view South Asians as differentiated groups. It was considered to be ‘multicultural manifesto’ that attempted to create a type of social cohesion and consensus. The approach of central government towards education conformed to the policies of privatisation, deregulation and competition, as part of a general shift towards the New Right. The ERA of 1988 further substantiated this move, with the Thatcherite economic plan impacting greatest on the education system. Gillborn (1997) argues that in the process, however inadvertently, equality of opportunity issues were ignored.

2.2.3 A review of school effectiveness research

At the end of the 1980s, as part of the move in political ideology towards the New Right in education, increasingly the educational inequalities of individuals and groups began to be measured at the level of the school. Research based on 1985-1987 ILEA examinations data by Nuttall *et al.* (1989) as well as the five year study conducted by Smith and Tomlinson (1989) are the most well known.

The *School Effect* by Smith and Tomlinson (1989) was a study of eighteen urban multicultural comprehensives in four LEAs; two in the South East, one in the Midlands and one in the North of England. The study aims were to measure differences between schools based on outcomes achieved by pupils at sixteen after taking into consideration differences in attainment over a five-year period (1981-1986). The schools taking part ranged from those containing few ethnic minorities to high concentrations (12 per cent to 89 per cent). Pupils were given attainment tests during the first two years and examination results at sixteen were statistically analysed. Two separate questionnaires

were administered to pupils (during 13-plus subject selection stage) and one additional questionnaire was given to teachers. Some parents were also interviewed. The study used multilevel regression modelling techniques to explore examination results by gender, social class and ethnic group, taking into consideration differences between schools.

The study found ethnic minority pupils were achieving relative to the national average at the time. Ten per cent achieved more than 5+ A-C passes at O level, 32 per cent achieved 1-4 A-C passes at O level and 58 per cent achieved no passes at all. The study found a strong association between social class and examination achievement, such that 'on average children from professional and managerial families obtained nearly eight times as many higher grade passes as those from families belonging to the "underclass" group (where neither parent had a job in the five years before the study was carried out)' (Smith and Tomlinson, 1989, p. 245). The study found the school a child attends makes greatest difference to examination attainment than factors associated with ethnicity. In general, the study found differences in the examination success of ethnic minority groups to reflect findings from past research.

The study, however, received some criticism for its use of multi-level modelling. The sample sizes for ethnic minority groups were small, 'most of the Bangladeshi pupils, for example, were concentrated in a single girls' school' and an overall sample of 1,154 was not considered high enough for accurate statistical analysis (Drew, 1995, p. 29). It was indicated the schools selected for the study helped only in being able to *describe* average differences. Furthermore, the study was thought not to have informed why and how ethnic minority groups came to attend such ineffective schools in the first instance (Gillborn and Drew, 1992).

Nevertheless, it is clear the Smith and Tomlinson (1989) study was an important

juncture in the history of research on ethnic minority groups in education. An attempt to try to understand how different schools can affect the performance of ethnic minority groups, given the social class and ethnicity of pupils was an important step. Different methodological tools can be used to explore an added dimension thought to be significant for ethnic minority groups in education, namely the effect of differing schools on the education of South Asians. There is a persuasive argument advancing that educational achievement is a close function of the type of school a child attends. That is, the more effective an educational institution the less important are socio-economic status or parent education levels, although it is apparent both the latter invariably add to the performance of a child given an effective school. The Smith and Tomlinson (1989) study valuably opened up a number of opportunities for further research in the area.

Other school effectiveness research carried out in the mid-1980s was based on the analysis of examination results by ethnicity, provided by the ILEA for the years 1985-1987, and analysed by Kysel (1988) and Nuttall *et al.* (1989). Data for the year 1986 based on examination results of 17,058 pupils from 106 schools (72 of all) showed East African Asians and Indians performed well with Pakistanis performing above average. The Bangladeshis achieved well below average with 42 per cent gaining no grades at all. It was argued the reduced Bangladeshi performance was due to 'poverty, social class and lack of fluency of English'. Factors within schools included 'negative stereotyping and low expectations by teachers of pupils from particular ethnic groups, lack of relevance of the curriculum to pupil's needs and poor communication between the school and the parents' (Kysel, 1988, pp. 87-8).

Results from ILEA schools were also statistically examined by Nuttall *et al.* (1989). In 1987, 87 per cent (121 of 141) of the schools responded to the study (18,314

pupils). Eighty-two per cent of the schools were used in the final analysis as there were inconsistencies to the data and multilevel modelling was used for 'better estimates of sub-group differences'. It was found 'all ethnic groups perform[ed] significantly better than the ESWIs [English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish], except those of Afro-Caribbean background who perform[ed] slightly but not significantly worse' (Nuttall *et al.*, 1989, p. 773). Girl's schools performed best of all. When the school governing bodies were asked to respond, they offered broad-curricula factors as causes for difference, which would be corrected through 'rigorous monitoring and high quality language support'. It was argued by Nuttall and Varlaam (1990) that social class was the primary factor thought most effectual outside the control of the school.

A Larger-scale study from the 1990s to examine the effect of ethnicity, gender, and social class on educational achievement was conducted using multi-level logistic regression techniques over a nine-year period. Samples were selected from primary school and progress was measured until year 11 and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) results. It was proposed that there were seven factors which were likely to affect results statistically; eligibility of free meals; large family size; one-parent family; semi- or un-skilled manual occupations of parents or unemployment; behaviour; fluency in English and 'ethnic family background' (Sammons, 1995). Here, it is not clear whether structural or cultural factors were significant and why, and as such, it provides opportunities for further, albeit, more qualitative research to tackle to these issues.

The notion that there is a fair and accurate method to compare one school with another, nonetheless, is critically questioned (Gray *et al.*, 1986). Differences between pupils at the level of the home are not easily identifiable, such that 'comparable opportunities' open to pupils cannot be measured in easily distinguishable statistical

terms. Variations in examination performance used as the benchmark for which better or worse schools are judged appears to be a limited concept and yet 'comparisons between secondary schools have perforce been confined to their results in public examinations' (Figueroa, 1992, p. 402). The use of aggregated results has led to an inadequate comprehension of the processes because 'individual data are collapsed to the school mean-level' (Gray *et al.*, 1986, p. 98). Moreover, examination performance variability from year to year affects the development of longitudinal analyses and models incorporating measures of prior-secondary school attainment provide different results from those that do not (Gray *et al.*, 1990). In addition, there is scant indication to show how far school factors are effectual in relation to factors outside the control of the school. Interpreting the effect of multiple variables at any one point in time does not permit a satisfactory understanding of differentiated processes for different ethnic minority groups. Insufficient knowledge is attained about the nature of the pupil or the school in question (Coe and Fitz-Gibbon, 1998). Consequently, as a result of school effectiveness research the 'relationship between schools and their communities has, at least until very recently, been largely disregarded' (Gibson and Asthana, 1998, p. 279).

The most significant flaw of multivariate and multiple-regression modelling is that it ignores the economic and social context in which schools and their pupils find themselves (Plewis, 1988). As the way in which the education system is currently in operation, it is especially difficult to generate statistical answers to questions of inequality and particularly over time (Drew and Demack, 1998). For example, extensive reviews of research have found ethnic minority groups, especially some South Asians, are achieving on a par with or better than their white counterparts (Taylor and Hegerty, 1985; Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000), but there is little knowledge of precise sub-group differences or in indeed the everyday processes.

Therefore, school effectiveness studies based on an analysis of examination results have largely remained incomplete, particularly in relation to ethnic minority pupils. The insufficiency is based on the use of inadequate statistical techniques. Data sets tend to be too small and the collapsing of certain ethnic minority groups adds to the inaccuracy of modelling. The use of multi-level modelling to measure aspects of performance using individual pupil and school data is still in its infancy, and although popular with central government, it is largely put to doubt by the academic and scientific community in this field of research or is used with great care. Aitkin and Longford (1986) evoke the precise statistical complexities of multi-level modelling in research on school effectiveness in some detail.

Nevertheless, it is clear the ability to compare the effect of one school with another is in principle constructive. School effectiveness research has at least opened up notions of being able to compare one school with another to determine the effect of schools *per se*, but due to limitations of statistical modelling, qualitative methods can be used to answer questions posed by such quantitative research.

2.2.4 Teachers and institutional racism

Consideration of the interaction between ethnic minority pupils and white teachers is required to determine the processes of education in greater detail. The question of how teachers perceive ethnic minority groups in education is important to expand, as it is at this level of interaction that more subtle forms of racism occur, particularly in relation to African-Caribbean groups. Findings from research into aspects of teacher racism, whether witting or unwitting on their part, have been stormily contested in education journals with debate revolved around issues of methodology and the politico-ideological perspectives of the research itself.

The idea of teacher racism in education is put forward by antiracist educationists and those regarding teachers merely at the periphery of educational underachievement are termed 'methodological purists' by them. The idea of teacher racism and institutional racism in schools, on the other hand, is certainly not new. The *Rampton Report* (DES, 1981) related ethnic minority underachievement to the failures of 'bad teachers', 'a lack of responsiveness' and 'bad practise'. Indeed, even earlier on, research on attitudes towards ethnic minority pupils suggested teachers had failed to recognise differences in the cultures of ethnic minority pupils (Brittan, 1976).

A central component of the problem as identified above is whether teachers *do* actually act in a discriminative manner. Teacher perceptions have been thought to affect pupil setting and consequently some ethnic minority groups are prepared for examinations below their natural abilities would indicate (Tomlinson, 1992). In general, teacher racism is thought to affect African-Caribbeans the greatest. The tendencies have been for South Asians to be seen by teachers as technically of 'high ability and socially as conformist', in comparison to African-Caribbeans who are thought to have 'low ability... [and]... potential discipline problems' (Mac an Ghaill, 1988, p. 196). Other research conducted on teachers and their attitude towards ethnic minority groups has drawn to the surface some of the implications of being placed in certain sets for eventual examination outcome. Working class and ethnic minority groups have been found to be worse off and ethnic minority girls compartmentalised by teachers (Tomlinson, 1987).

In other similar studies, analogous patterns are repeated. A study of 13-plus subject choices conducted in the mid-1980s found that the African-Caribbeans did not try to work harder to improve themselves because they believed teachers would not eventually move them up into the higher sets (Wright, 1986; 1987). In one ethnographic study of a Midlands school, it was discovered that as a result of the negative perceptions

of white teachers, African-Caribbean boys 'had to fight harder to retain their high status choices' (Gillborn, 1990, p. 139). More recent research has shown the extent to which African-Caribbean boys are far more likely to be excluded from school and that it is directly related to teacher prejudice. Gillborn (1998) ascertains that these repeated research findings provide incontrovertible evidence of racism in schools and how teachers can be directly implicated.

In the case of South Asians, research has shown parents have a propensity to agree to GCSE subject choices largely based on teacher determinations, 'most of the process is pre-judged'. In one study, it was found Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans tended to be the most disadvantaged with GCSE subject choices. East African Asians and Indians however were considered as having 'high science potential'. It was the 'white, male middle-class pupils from a two-parent family...[that] were the most satisfied at options choices' (Tomlinson, 1987, pp. 95-106).

Therefore, it is apparent schools can invariably adopt their own system of channelling individuals based on ability. The effect is seen clearly in the individual concerned and ultimately in the examination results they obtain (Troyna, 1991; CRE, 1992). In addition, set placing in the first year of primary schooling will affect set placements at the start of secondary. It was also found that the whites were more likely to be entered for the higher-grade subjects than ethnic minority groups (Tanna, 1990). On this basis, ethnic minority pupils have tended to be under-represented in the top sets and more likely to be over-represented in those sets containing children with learning difficulties (see Troyna in Cashmore, 1992, pp. 85-90).

Throughout the 1990s, an intense debate has ensued on the nature of teacher racism, its origins, or whether it can be adequately proven at all (Foster, 1990; 1993; Wright, 1990; Connolly, 1992; Gillborn and Drew, 1993; Troyna, 1993; 1993a). The

question is whether teachers are deliberate in their actions, therefore firmly placing the onus of responsibility of underachievement onto teachers and schools. Or, alternatively, is it the social and the cultural nature of ethnic minority groups that inhibits their achievement, such that teachers and schools are only party to the process and subsequently react in a way that is then seen as discriminative.

Rather than evaluating the structure and mechanisms of schooling *per se*, these multicultural educationists regard underachievement as a function of the nature of ethnic minority groups. Branded as 'methodological purists', they have been part of a 'wider project' to deny the existence of structural educational inequality, especially in the light of late-1980s and beyond ethnographic research (Mac an Ghail, 1988; Gillborn, 1990; Basit, 1997; Haw, 1998; Bhatti, 1999), which has unequivocally emphasised the extent of prejudice and discrimination experienced by ethnic minority school pupils and college students alike. It is also apparent that teacher attitudes affect African-Caribbean groups more starkly, who are seen in a negative light whether wittingly or unwittingly.

The debate about teacher racism is never ending (Pilkington, 1999). The presence of teacher racism is one that is deemed sensitive and remains open to further research. It is quite the case teachers make a tremendous difference to the way in which ethnic minority groups develop educationally. The discussion also here adds to the wider criticism teachers and the profession itself has been receiving in recent times, in particular by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED, 1997), largely because of 'a lack of professionalism' on the part of teachers. It has led to the present Labour government to encourage new entrants into the profession and provide them with an opportunity for fast-track career development linked to performance related pay (DfEE, 1998).

2.2.5 South Asians after compulsory education

In the analysis of the educational achievement of South Asians, there are discernible patterns that have emerged based on past attempts to explain the variations of ethnic minority and South Asian groups in education. Particularly in relation to examination results research, on average, South Asians perform better than African-Caribbeans and are far more likely to continue in education after compulsory school leaving age. Early research identified this trend and urged that a mixture of higher aspirations combined with added parental involvement encourages South Asians to continue (Craft and Craft, 1983). A study conducted in the North of England showed a similar situation with South Asians found more likely to remain in education and in some same cases for as long as possible before entering the world of work (Penn and Scattergood, 1992).

Possibly the largest study of ethnic minority groups in education and the labour market is the Youth Cohort Survey (YCS), which is still collecting and analysing data, and is based on individuals sampled from a town in the North West of England (Demack *et al.*, 2000). Statistical results have robustly established a universally high rate of participation for 16-19 year old ethnic minority groups in education (Drew *et al.*, 1997). The findings are particularly pertinent given the social class and gender of South Asian respondents. There are, however, complexities to this broad-sweeping generalisation. Further analysis of the YCS by Drew and Fosam (1994) has found South Asians use the 16-19 period to improve on GCSE scores proceeding to take A levels a year on.

Three explanations are provided. First, there is an apparently greater commitment on the part of ethnic minority groups and their families, which helps to ensure success combined with a cultural belief in the inherent importance of education and removal from it would be detrimental. Second, there is greater motivation on the

part of certain ethnic minority groups to ensure they have the best possible qualifications before entering the labour market formally. Third, ethnic minority groups may well continue to stay in the education system to avoid racial discrimination in the labour market. These patterns are also repeated elsewhere in other research as highlighted below.

Research conducted by Krutika Tanna in the mid-1980s is especially useful to draw attention to here (Tanna, 1987). It is based on South Asian first year university undergraduates and their experiences of secondary schooling. The South Asians in the study began their university education in the early 1980s. Of the South Asian sample, 37 per cent were East African, 38 per cent Indian with a small number of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. Most of the white students were found to have attended selective schools in contrast to nearly sixty per cent of the South Asian students originating from comprehensive schools. It was found the more 'effective' secondary schools that were attended by white students permitted them to sit some of their O level examinations early. The majority of South Asians, however, had been through comprehensive schools and were more likely to have been placed in Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) streams, having then to sit their O levels a year later.

In relation to A levels, it was found there was a tendency for South Asians to re-take examinations. Four explanations were provided. Firstly, many sixth formers were studying for A levels and O levels together which invariably proved too demanding for some. Second, teachers regarded some of the South Asians as having overtly 'high aspirations' and were thought not suitable as 'university material'. Third, a number of the South Asian students alluded they had experienced 'poor teaching' and 'bad schooling'. Fourth, some of the A level subjects chosen tended to be the most difficult. Therefore, 'for many South Asians it had been more of a struggle' (Tanna, 1990, p.

364). The cumulative impact of all these factors led to the South Asian students at each stage of qualification being comparatively older than their white counterparts. It was also acknowledged that the type of school the students attended made greatest impact on the number of CSE and O level subjects taken. Some of the respondents revealed that they were encouraged to sit CSE subjects based on the expectations of teachers. Furthermore, it was found parental support was only a factor of how they had understood the education system. As such, 'the delay in acquiring qualifications was, thus not necessarily due to earlier failure, but often a "topping up" to obtain further qualifications; in other words, responses to earlier constraints in their academic achievement' (*ibid.* p. 363).

Other research has emphasised the greater participation rates of South Asians in higher education but also in the process determined differences between South Asian groups, 'East Africans, both male and female, have done better... and females from all ethnic groups have done less well. Furthermore, the disparity between male and female for all ethnic groups is significant' (Singh, 1990, p. 347). The difference between genders is also a finding other research has exposed (Vellins, 1982; Ballard and Vellins, 1985). In all cases, the fact that ethnic minority groups were more likely to have attended comprehensive schools placed them at further disadvantage when making applications to higher education institutions.

At the beginning of the 1990s, analysis was undertaken of the 1991 'traditional' universities (Universities Central Council on Admissions, UCCA) and 'former polytechnics' (Polytechnics Central Council on Admissions, PCAS) entry data (Modood, 1993; Taylor, 1993). For the first time detailed information on ethnicity, gender and A level scores was made available. It was found ethnic minority groups applied for degree subjects which 'were popular amongst candidates with relatively high

“A” Level scores’ (Modood and Shiner, 1994, p. 27). In the process of repeat applications, universities and colleges were liable to ask for higher grades or to not make offers at all. African-Caribbeans and Pakistanis ‘were less likely to have gained admission to university, Chinese and Asian-other continued to be significantly more likely to have gained admission’ (*ibid.*). In addition, ethnic minority females were more likely to have gained admission than males. Those from higher social classes were ‘significantly’ more successful than those from partly skilled backgrounds. Candidates applying to local universities were significantly more likely to be admitted. Nevertheless, questions remained. Why were Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans less likely to obtain entry, particularly to the ‘traditional’ universities? It was speculated that the lower teacher expectations of Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans may well have affected these groups, especially during earlier periods in their educational life cycles. In addition, the ‘former polytechnics’ may have been more appealing as they tend to offer vocationally driven degree courses. Furthermore, students may have expressed a desire to remain near other ethnic minority groups with shared ethnic, religious and cultural experiences, ‘especially if that was one’s experience at school’ (*ibid.* p. 50).

2.3 The beginning of new research on South Asians in education

It is clear there can be no single factor that can fully explain the variations of South Asian educational performance. Neither have statistical studies been broad enough to incorporate sufficient sample sizes or have all qualitative studies in the past been sufficiently detailed in their elucidations. There is a need to ask more sophisticated questions in order to determine educational inequalities accurately and to analyse subgroup experiences more fully (Gaine and George, 1999).

In the late 1990s, research reviews have further elaborated upon some of the

stagnant issues emergent in ethnic minority educational inequality. The Office for Standards in Education (1999) reported on a follow up exercise emanating from the 1996 review of educational inequalities in English schools (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996). It was found that the performance of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils during the early years remained problematic. Underachievement, however, was found to disappear once a sound command of English had been acquired. The fact so few Bangladeshis and Pakistanis achieved the high GCSE grades nevertheless remained a cause for concern. Many of the secondary schools highlighted by OFSTED had already implemented broad-ranging equal opportunity policies. Although a number also collected precise ethnic minority data on achievement, few were seen to be using it effectively. Where children had particular language difficulties, the use of bilingual home-school link-workers was felt to be essential. The OFSTED report highlighted that a great many LEAs had still not effectively implemented policies to tackle the underachievement of certain ethnic minority groups.

Since ethnic minority groups first appeared in schools, research and policymaker interest on their educational achievement has been extensive. Over time, various theoretical explanations have been provided to show how and why ethnic minority groups experience education in different ways. Central features of this explanation have revolved around issues of social class at one level and in recent times the effectiveness of schools. Antiracist educationists have purported the view that the perception of white teachers, in particular, towards African-Caribbean groups is the primary cause for their adversity in underachievement. Multicultural educationists see the domestic environment of ethnic minority groups and the social and cultural characteristics they possess to be the principal factors in their limited educational performance.

From assimilation, integration, to cultural pluralism a major ideological attempt

was made by the Left-radicals in the shape of antiracist education at a time when central government policy was increasingly shifting to the New Right. For ethnic minority groups in education, at present, a variant at times dubbed antiracist multicultural education is seen in some schools. The position of South Asians within existing class structures not only dictates their norms and values towards education but also governs their motivations and aspirations that, in part, are affected by teachers and schools. To understand the educational achievements of South Asians it is important that the achievement processes of the many are understood first (Parekh, 1988; 1988a). The need to question ethnicised and gendered disadvantage in education necessitates an evaluation of all aspects of education (Troyna, 1987a). Furthermore, it is also important to distinguish between the belief that high achievers are 'ethnic minority successes' and low achievers result from 'cultural and institutional racism' (Bullivant, 1989, pp. 68-93).

New research has to determine more sophisticated assessments of educational achievement, but also needs to recognise individually and situationally deterministic settings. Therefore, South Asians from different socio-economic positions need to be considered in relation to the effect of different schools. Research also needs to examine the differences between South Asians more closely but caution must also be taken to avoid concentrating on the experiences of ethnic minority sub-groups to the exclusion of others (cf. Basit, 1997; Debnath, 1998; Haw, 1998; Haque, 1999). Research also needs to evaluate the experiences of ethnic minority pupils at different stages of the educational life cycle. 'Methodological purity' is to be ensured so the researcher does not always interact with the researched with political objectives in mind and essentially qualitative methods are utilised (see Chapter Three). In addition, an over-reliance on the multi-level modelling of examination results needs to be limited unless it can be

accurately conducted.

This study, therefore, aims to understand more finely the differences in educational performance between Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis in Birmingham. To fully understand the characteristics of South Asian educational achievement, there are a range of important variables which are found to be important to consider. These variables affect South Asians both at a micro and at a macro level and both exogenously and endogenously. And, as such, in defining the central objectives of this study, the intentions have been to identify the roles social class and the effect of schools play in the education of South Asians, to question additional factors which contribute to variations in achievement and to determine the range of difference between South Asian groups more fully. As such, the central hypothesis asks how far the educational achievements of South Asians are a function of social class and the school effect alone. There are also key sub-hypotheses. How far is the effectiveness of an institution a singular determinant of achievement? What role and effect do South Asian parents have on the education of their children? What roles do religion and culture play? In addition, how do teachers affect the education of South Asians? What are the perceptions of teachers? What is the effect of antiracist multicultural policy in schools?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

There are a number of educationists and sociologists who agree that racism is revealed in educational settings but few agree on the way in which it is revealed. Therefore, 'any research on ethnic relations is sensitive and will probably be contested' (Cornford, 1989, p. 209). Furthermore, 'how a researcher thinks about "race" and ethnicity influences the design of their project, the kind of data they gather, and the analyses they conduct' (Gillborn, 1998, p. 54). It is important, therefore, to discuss the methodology used by this research more fully. Here, the combined constituents of social class, gender, and South Asian ethnicities are incorporated into the design and framework of the research. Factors of religion and culture are considered in addition as well as the omnipresent influence of the effect of schools.

Over four decades ago, research first began to question the reasons for differential educational achievement among ethnic minority groups in Britain. It was stated at the time that 'the education of different social and ethnic groups is a function not only of their postulated innate capacities frustrated or encouraged by their material environment, but also of culturally conditioned attainments, attitudes and aspirations of the ethos of the educational institutions to which they have access' (Floud and Halsey, 1958, p. 184). Any research on South Asians in education needs to explore not only individuals *or* institutions but to look at both.

Throughout the last few decades, since ethnic minority immigration, research on educational inequality has overwhelmingly found achievement directly related to the social class of pupils. There are in addition persuasive indicators to propose parent education levels are also important factors to consider, especially for higher education

entry (Burnhill *et al.*, 1990). As such, there are particular implications for South Asians not only as they occupy different status levels in society, because of their current economic and social positions (Modood *et al.*, 1997), but also certain South Asian parents tend to be uneducated (Ghuman, 1980; Bhachu, 1985), and some Muslim parents in particular (Joly, 1989; Gardner, 1992).

Herein, it is argued, lies the basis for difference. The factors of social class and parent education levels certainly do help to explain a level of variation between South Asian groups. There are, it is argued, additional factors which help to explain distinct differences between South Asian groups and they are observable along religious and cultural lines. It is essentially the latter which drives this study as it questions how South Asian educational achievement levels are also affected by religion and culture and in what ways. The *processes* underpinning the educational achievement of South Asians are made up of a complex web of factors including social class, the effectiveness of schools, gender, teacher ethnocentricity, wider institutional racism, the role of parents and the continually changing nature of the education system. This research is unique as it takes as its central point of study an evaluation of differences in the rate of achievement between South Asian groups based on the traditionally recognised variables of social class and the effect of schools as well as the variables of religion and culture.

A particular facet of the research design in this study was the omission of a white control group. It was felt less significant to use one because a great deal of comparative albeit more quantitative research exists in the field (Maughan and Rutter, 1986; Kysel, 1988; Nuttall *et al.*, 1989; Smith and Tomlinson, 1989; Drew, 1995). Resource constraints added to the pressures of wanting to explore specific South Asian differences. A study concentrating on only South Asians was therefore chosen. The

approach also follows recent ethnographic research, which has focused on South Asian groups by gender (cf. Basit, 1997; Debnath, 1998; Haw, 1998; Bhatti, 1999; Haque, 1999). By using three South Asian groups (Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis), each acts as a control group for the other and consequently further re-enforces the methodological approach adopted.

Specifically, this research used a distinctive qualitative-methodological framework based on a range of selective and comprehensive schools. By involving a relatively large sample of actors, detailed open-ended statements can be used to engender 'grounded theory', which is generated through, in this case, qualitative empiricism (Glaser, 1968). Certain elements of the presentation of data throughout the study also involve the use of case study examples (Yin, 1994).

A further imperative is the extent to which this study can provide valuable insights into the processes of education for specific groups. It is argued policymakers can use sociology of education research such as this to directly improve professionalism in schools (McIntyre, 1997; Wrigley, 1997; Hargreaves, 1999, Mortimore, 1999).

3.2 Interview method: the researcher and the researched

There are a range of important primary methodological preconditions which need to be taken into account when researching the processes of South Asian educational achievement. They include an evaluation of the role of the researcher and the question of empowering the researched through knowledge.

In this study, face-to-face interviews were the primary method of enquiry, but in addition, self-completed questionnaires were also administered to certain respondents. As the focus of study is the 'education system', it poses a particular dilemma for a South Asian researcher of a broadly similar background to the researched (Burgess, 1986). The

role of the researcher had to be transparent; therefore, aspects of ethnicity, gender, linguistic competence, cultural awareness, and education class were ubiquitous considerations in the interaction between the researcher and the researched.

As such, to effectively produce sound social science research, the personification of the 'ideal researcher' was generated; not simply during the data gathering process but also as part of the interactions and confrontations embroiled within. For example, in attempting to negotiate passage into educational institutions, various appearances had to be kept with gatekeepers to ultimately gain access to potential respondents. Furthermore, this characterisation took different form in relation to the differing types of gatekeepers and respondents. When interviewing pupils, the researcher had to demonstrate he was young enough to engage with respondents but mature enough to remain detached. Similarly, with parents, the researcher had to be considered a professional with genuine social science interests, ensuring all ethical and moral standards of research were adhered to. In addition, great care was required so as not to be drawn into politically or religiously charged conversation. Furthermore, in interviewing teachers, who were often senior, extra care was taken when discussing and dealing with sensitive information. Each experience, nevertheless, was achieved through the management of impressions (Goffman, 1990), as well as through the utilisation of appropriate social science methods.

During interviews, it was important that all the respondents felt comfortable in answering questions and confidently imparted to the researcher their beliefs, opinions and values towards all aspects of education (Denscombe, 1984). The proficiency had to be developed and harnessed early on (McCracken, 1988; Oppenheim, 1992; Bell, 1993; May, 1993). Indeed, the in-depth interview is a powerful way to elicit research data. To maximise results, the researcher has to 'actively listen', to the keep the interview

‘focused’, ‘infilling and explicating’ where data is lacking and identifying clues from respondents. A renowned educationist puts it thus,

The interview, therefore, is not just a device for gathering information. It is a process of constructing reality to which both parties contribute and by which both are affected. Interviewers put something of themselves into an interview. It may be some contrasting or complementary experiences, perhaps, or some indications of their own personae, or at the very least they act as a sounding board. They come out reflecting on how the interview has affected their thoughts, ideas, viewpoints, theories. The researcher is, however, already looking to the next chain at a different time, or with a differing person; or be it observation, study of documents, questionnaire or whatever.

Hammersley *et al.*, 1994, p. 60

Furthermore, it is possible that the interaction of the researcher and the researched may give rise to the perception and experience of ethnicity, especially if there are questions relating to identity (Song and Parker, 1995). More complex issues of identity, even so, were not incorporated into this study as it was felt sufficient research had already been conducted in this field, and during the course of this study at least three credible studies ethnographically explored questions of South Asian females and their education (Bosit, 1997; Haw, 1998; Bhatti, 1999). It is argued, nevertheless, a researcher with shared ethnic characteristics is less likely to pathologise or stereotype and more likely to remain ‘ethnically correct’ (Brar, 1992, p. 195). A South Asian researcher originating from the city, who is familiar with local economy and society and able to communicate in a range of South Asian languages and dialects is eminently more proficiently placed to conduct the study.

Indeed, one of the most important roles of the researcher is they remain ‘curious’ in the field and indeed courageous in the face of all manners of resistance or obstacles placed before them. There is a need for ‘confidence in their ability to impart scientific value to whatever they find out... insights of value and curiosity must be informed’ (Beyer, 1992, p. 66). In educational settings in particular, ‘such work requires the

building of relationships of mutual trust and respect between the researcher and the pupils' (Gillborn and Drew, 1992, p. 554). Shared ethnic characteristics with the researched together with sensitivity towards steering away from questions revolved around ethnic identity provide greater opportunity for the *processes* of educational achievements to be evaluated.

Given the sensitivity of attitudes towards the question of ethnic minority groups in education, an additional area raised is of political ideology. The antiracist education perspective encourages the researcher to actively challenge common-held beliefs about 'race'. Antiracist educationists, 'seek not only to highlight forms of inequality and injustice, but view the research act itself as constituting a deliberate challenge to the *status quo*... [adding] to emancipatory knowledge' (Troyna and Carrington, 1989, p. 206, *original emphasis*). An effect of this act is to empower the oppressed. However, with this type of research, attention moves away from race relations and towards racism in education, such that the education system itself becomes the focus of attention. It is argued, nevertheless, that it is important to challenge stereotypes which give rise to racism in educational settings; and in research terms to determine accurately aspects of 'biography, culture and history... [as]... the education system is part of a wider system of constraints which, often unwittingly, serves to maintain black people in a position of structural subordination' (Mac an Ghail, 1989, p. 271-84).

The view that researchers can challenge the negative outcomes of ethnic minorities in educational settings is critiqued by 'methodological purists', who regard the approach 'a fundamental error of "critical" research to assume that it is possible to pursue both knowledge and practical goals simultaneously' (Hammersley, 1998, p. 32). Taking a politicised perspective in the conduct of research, therefore, should to be regarded as a move away from acceptable forms of social science research methodology.

Nonetheless, an important aspect to consider is that racism takes many different forms in the educational life cycle experiences of ethnic minority individuals and groups. As such, Carrington and Troyna (1998) argue that questions of racism as well as educational disadvantage are fundamental to any study of ethnic minority groups in education no matter how it is politicised in the sphere and domain of academic debate.

3.3 Research and data gathering process

The research started in January 1995. For the greater part of that year a literature review was carried out and the methodological design and framework were determined. After careful assessment, it was felt that to optimally answer the questions motivating this research, a series of in-depth interviews with various respondents would need to be undertaken. A difficult problematic then was to determine from which educational institutions and how.

Birmingham contains a great many schools and further education institutions all of which display different modes of operation, funding status, gender orientation and selection method. The decision came to select potential respondents from a complete a citywide sampling frame as possible to reflect the diverse nature of South Asians and educational institution types. The Research and Statistics division of the Birmingham LEA were first approached to determine the most favourable course of action, bearing in mind the need to establish contacts with schools and colleges; in order to interview pupils, to gain access to parents and interview them, to interview teachers and also make use of primary examinations data by ethnicity and gender. The department felt the most appropriate way in which to receive co-operation would be to approach the institutions directly and to ask their permission individually.

At that point, eight 11-18 secondary schools and two further education colleges

(16-19) were considered. Four of the schools single-sex (selective) and the other four mixed (comprehensive). Two of the four single-sex schools to be independent and two grammar (all four schools here being selective). The other four schools would be a mixture of modern comprehensive, voluntary aided and grant maintained schools. It was conjecturally understood that many South Asians in Birmingham entered independent and grammar schools, although precise figures to illustrate this were not available to the author. As such, therefore, it was felt important to understand processes leading to the educational achievement of selective school pupils as well as those in comprehensive or grant maintained schools. Two relatively large central-Birmingham further education colleges were selected to reflect the high numbers of South Asians in further education.

Once a range had been determined, a standard letter with a request for assistance and a condensed research proposal was sent to all the intended school heads and college principals. After this introductory manoeuvre, telephone calls were made to arrange meetings. At this point, some heads and principals felt they did not wish to take part in the study arguing it would not add to their existing knowledge. One head stated that her comprehensive school had already been the subject of much academic and policymaker research in the past and did not wish for more. Others less convinced at the onset became more assured of the potential advantage after careful application of the charm offensive. Undoubtedly, others were positively sympathetic to the concerns of a researcher wishing to provide new insights as well as gain academic credence. Many of the heads and principles felt their own direct involvement would be too time costly and ordinarily a senior teacher was assigned the task of collaborating with the researcher. A positive relationship with the 'contact teachers' was important as it affected all aspects of the data gathering process. It had to be maintained positively as it was crucial to the completion of the study.

3.3.1 Sampled schools and pupils

To determine most effectively how different South Asians perform in relation to their social class, ethnicity and gender it was felt important to allow for a wide variation in the sample of schools to be used for the interviews. The educational institutions however were also 'selected on an opportunity sampling basis' (Tomlinson, 1997a, p. 71); with the aim of discovering processes in vastly differing educational settings, the basis of study resting on the comparability of South Asian groups in polarised settings.

The schools used in the study (sampled schools) were finally selected at the end of 1995. Originally, eight were thought most suitable but ultimately only six were attained. A boy's independent school in particular did not wish to take part after determined efforts were made to encourage the head ('Omega High for Boys'). The equivalent Omega High for Girls School did take part and encouragingly collaborated with the researcher even though there was a change of head towards the end. Rosebud and Psi Grove schools were matched for grammar school status; the first a girl's and second a boy's school.

Table 3.1 below lists the sampled schools and highlights their essential characteristics. It is seen from the table that St Aiden's and New Heath schools are located in the same inner city ward of Small Heath. Longlake School is a large comprehensive school situated in the adjacent inner city ward of Moseley. Rosebud School and Psi Grove schools, although selective, are located in the inner city wards of Handsworth and Aston. Omega High School for Girls is an independent school with a national reputation for high academic success and is located in the affluent area of Edgbaston. All the schools contained a sixth form.

The funding status of schools is currently under review by central government but the definitions stated below were relevant at the time of the study.

Table 3.1 Sampled schools: status, gender and location

School	Entry Status	Gender	Funding Status	Age-range	Ward
Omega High	11+ ^A	Girls	Independent ^B	11-18	Edgbaston
Rosebud	11 +	Girls	Grant Maintained ^C	11-18	Handsworth
Psi Grove	11 +	Boys	Grant Maintained	11-18	Aston
Longlake	Comprehensive ^D	Mixed	County ^E	11-18	Moseley
St Aiden's	Comprehensive	Mixed	Voluntary Aided ^F	11-18	Small Heath
New Heath	Comprehensive	Mixed	Grant Maintained	11-18	Small Heath

Source: adapted from DfEE, 2000

^A Selective school: takes pupils depending on their ability or aptitude.

^B Charging fees and selective.

^C Grant maintained school: self-governing with the school governing body responsible for school admission policy.

^D Comprehensive school: takes all pupils, regardless of their ability, aptitude or whether they have a place at a selective school.

^E County school: maintained by the LEA. The LEA is responsible for the school admission policy.

^F Voluntary Aided school: maintained by the LEA, with a generally religious foundation appointing most of the governing body. The governing body is the admission authority.

The contact teachers from each of the sampled schools were originally asked to select a random South Asian sample of pupils from their record of GCSE and A level students. Given different ratios of South Asian pupils in each of the schools, contact teachers were each asked to select up to thirty pupils of mixed ability and social class background. From the comprehensive schools, the contact teachers were asked to divide their sample equally by gender. A list of potential respondents was drawn up by the schools and the contact teacher and a letter of introduction was sent to all the parents of each child. The schools wrote to parents with a reply-slip at the base of each letter. Altogether, eight-nine pupils were interviewed.

Interviews with pupils began in February of 1996 and ended in July of 1996. During the semi-structured interviews, pupils were asked questions relating to secondary school entry, GCSE choice at 13-plus, examination success at GCSE, A levels and potential higher education entry. They were also asked to discuss the role of parents, teachers, siblings, friends and any other parameters that to potentially affect their education. Aspects of religion and culture were also explored as well as social class and

the effect of schools (see Appendix A for pupil questions). All the pupils were individually interviewed using a tape recorder for approximately one hour each. Two girls refused to be tape-recorded. All the interviews were conducted on school premises during respondent free time and in English. Interviews took place in a designated room and often the contact teachers would view the interview from outside to ensure everything was in order. A small number of interviews were conducted during lunch breaks or after school hours, mainly because of imminent examinations or tests. The school pupil sample is shown by below gender in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Sampled pupils: school and gender

School	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Total (%)
Rosebud	-	24 (46)	24 (100)
New Heath	11 (46)	13 (54)	24 (100)
Psi Grove	12 (100)	-	12 (100)
St Aiden's	7 (58)	5 (42)	12 (100)
Longlake	7 (64)	4 (36)	11 (100)
Omega High	-	6 (100)	6 (100)
Total	37 (42)	52 (58)	89 (100)

Forty-seven per cent of the total pupils in the sample was derived from the three selective schools; one independent and two grammar [42/89]. Although not entirely reflective of the situation of all South Asians in education in Birmingham, selective schools are popular with South Asian pupils and their parents and therefore the processes which lead to their selective and ultimately to their achievements had to be evaluated more closely. As part of a study aiming to discover the ways in which differences are found between South Asians, such a high proportion of selective schools and subsequently sampled pupils, invariably added to, rather than limited, the study. The above table also shows there were more girls than there were boys.

As a cautionary note, the question of how pupils were selected for interviews is worthy of consideration. Although a fairly neutral method was adopted for the purposes

of accurately selecting an unbiased sample, it is apparent teachers may have exercised their own discretion and considered some pupils more suited for interview than others, particularly if the school's image, performance levels and antiracist multicultural education policies were to be scrutinised.

3.3.2 Sampled colleges and students

After the completion of the pupil interviews, it was decided to conduct a survey of college students. The aim of this sub-project was to discover the attitudes of older South Asians on their experiences of school. Random samples of South Asian students from two further education colleges (Cherrywood and James Watt) and one sixth-form college (St Margaret's) were acquired and subsequently used to survey students. The college students were asked almost identical questions, but here respondents selected their responses from a finite set (as seen in Appendix B).

College students were randomly surveyed to add a further methodological dimension to the study. It was felt that targeting pupils through a process of selection by parents and teachers had its limitations. It also permits the use of views from slightly older South Asians on the nature of their education. Additionally, it was anticipated that all the students would not only originate from local Birmingham comprehensive schools, but also from a wide geographical area. It acts to balance the views of independent and grammar schools pupils on certain questions and issues.

Based on the student databases of the three colleges, the relative contact teachers were each asked to draw up a sample of 150 South Asian students equal in terms of age, gender, course level, perceived ability and the three South Asian groups (i.e., Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis). A combined list of 403 randomly sampled South Asians college students was assembled from the three colleges. Students were sent a

postal questionnaire with a reply-paid envelope. All but Cherrywood College sent a covering letter by the contact teacher. Altogether, 109 college students responded from three colleges, through questionnaires sent and received from July 1996 to December 1996. The entire postal survey provided a response rate of 27 per cent (James Watt College, 34 per cent; Cherrywood College, 19 per cent; St Margaret's College, 47 per cent). In more detail, from James Watt College, 146 students were sampled resulting in 37 responses and from Cherrywood College, 154 students sampled provided 21 responses. The St Margaret's College sample consisted of the entire second and third year student body. They were seven Bangladeshis [five boys, two girls], 50 Indians [23 boys, 27 girls] and 54 Pakistanis [31 boys, 23 girls]. A combined set of 111 students was sampled, of which 51 responded to the survey.

Respondents were provided with a multiple choice Likert attitude-scale questionnaire that also asked factual questions (Oppenheim, 1992). The questions revolved around themes similar to those asked of pupils. Respondents were asked to reflect upon their specific experiences of school, relationships with teachers, the effect of religion and the home, and the roles their parents played, as well as to write down anything they had to say in addition.

Nevertheless, the predicament with a research experiment of this type was with the wording of questions and the responses from which individuals were expected to select. Therefore, responses individuals decided on had not only to be based on the validity to students but also in the wording of questions and statements. As one eminent methodologist put it,

We must always bear in mind the difficulties the respondents may have in understanding the question and in forming an 'inner picture' of their own answers or reactions, and the degree to which these may be affected by inner curbs on private or self-incriminating information, by poor rapport, by the wish to maintain a social facade and by the response expectations which the

question may suggest. In other words, it is difficult enough to obtain a relatively unbiased answer even from a willing and clear-headed respondent who has correctly understood what we are after, without making our task virtually impossible by setting off this "train of responding" on the wrong track through poor question wording.

Ibid. 1992, p. 121.

Table 3.3 below shows the ethnicity and gender of the college student respondents. Over a quarter of the respondents were Pakistani females. One respondent did not state their ethnicity or gender.

Table 3.3 Sampled college students: ethnicity and gender

Gender	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Girls	7 (53)	24 (44)	28 (62)	59 (55)
Boys	9 (47)	15 (56)	25 (38)	49 (45)
Total	16 (100)	39 (100)	53 (100)	108 (100)

In terms of religious identification, of the 106 valid responses received (one value missing, one atheist and one not giving an identity), 65 per cent categorised themselves as Muslim, 25 per cent Hindu and eight per cent Sikh. Table 3.4 below shows where the college students stated they were born.

Table 3.4 Sampled college students: place of birth

Place of Birth	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Birmingham	9 (56)	26 (70)	35 (66)	70 (66)
UK, not Birmingham	1 (6)	8 (22)	3 (6)	12 (11)
Pakistan	-	-	11 (21)	11 (10)
Bangladesh	6 (38)	-	-	6 (6)
Kenya*	-	2 (5)	2 (4)	4 (4)
Abroad*	-	-	1 (2)	1 (1)
India	-	1 (3)	-	1 (1)
Kashmir*	-	-	1 (2)	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	37 (100)	53 (100)	106 (100)

*Categories are self-ascribed.

Of the 16 Bangladeshis in the sample, six were born in Bangladesh. Of the 53 Pakistanis, 15 were born abroad, either in Pakistan or outside of Britain. Ninety-two per cent of Indian students were British-born. As such, it is possible to suggest there is still

some migration (family re-unification) to Britain by some Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups compared to the more firmly established positions of Indians.

Aspects of the personal data revealed the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were more likely to have unemployed fathers. Pakistani fathers and mothers were far more likely to have retired from work. Bangladeshi fathers were least likely to be in full-time employment. Muslim (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) mothers were most likely to be homemakers. There was a high rate for Indian mothers found to be in full-time employment.

3.3.3 Sampled South Asian parents

South Asian parents were interviewed to explore the various ways in which they exercised an influence over their children's education and how they related to their children's teachers.

In March of 1997, the six sampled schools were re-contacted to arrange interviews with parents. A letter to parents was drafted and again here the schools wrote an additional letter to parents with a reply-slip at its base. Pupils were asked to take letters home to parents and return them directly to the school. Of the 169 letters with reply-slips sent out to parents, disappointingly, only fifteen responded positively, of which, eleven parents were successfully interviewed. It was felt this number was too small a sample to provide sufficient information and after some deliberation, it was decided to sample parents through snowball sampling. Additional parents were also selected by 'purposively sampling' South Asian parents known to be of varying ethnicity, social class and gender (McNeill, 1990, p. 39). Table 3.5 below profiles the South Asian parents in the overall sample.

Table 3.5 Profile of South Asian parent sample

No.	Parent	Religion	Occupation	Generation	Ethnic Origin	Location
1	Mother	Hinduism	Homemaker	Second	India	Edgbaston
2	Father	Hinduism	Scientist	First	India (via Kenya)	Harborne
3	Father	Islam	Restaurateur	First	Bangladesh	Aston
4 °	Father	Islam	Post-office manager	First	Bangladesh ^A	Great Barr
5	Father	Islam	Restaurateur	First	Bangladesh	Handsworth
6 °	Father	Islam	Unemployed	First	Bangladesh	Small Heath
7 °	Father	Islam	Unemployed	First	Bangladesh	Small Heath
8	Father	Islam	Paediatrician	First	India (via Tanzania)	Harborne
9	Father	Islam	Ambulance driver	Second	Pakistan	Saltley
10 °	Father	Islam	Taxi driver	Second	Pakistan	Saltley
11	Father	Islam	Print worker	Second	Pakistan	Saltley
12	Father	Islam	Entrepreneur	Second	Pakistan	Moseley
13	Father	Islam	Civil servant	Second	Pakistan	Small Heath
14 °	Father	Islam	Unemployed	First	Pakistan	Small Heath
15	Father	Islam	Restaurateur	Second	Pakistan	Sparkbrook
16 °	Father	Muslim	Retired factory worker	First	Pakistan	Sparkhill
17 °	Father	Sikhism	Entrepreneur	First	India	Handsworth
18	Father	Sikhism	Entrepreneur	First	India	Handsworth Wood
19	Father	Sikhism	Entrepreneur	First	India	Harborne
20 °	Grand-father	Hinduism	Retired school teacher	First	India (via Kenya)	South Yardley
21 °	Mother	Hinduism	Civil servant	First	India	Harborne
22	Mother	Muslim	Part-time employed	Second	Birmingham ^B	Small Heath
23 °	Mother	Sikhism	Entrepreneur	First	India	Hamstead
24	Mother	Sikhism	Pharmacist	Second	India	Harborne
25 °	Mother	Sikhism	Receptionist	Second	India	Sandwell

^A Married to an English woman.

^B Pakistani father, English mother and married to a Pakistani man.

° Parents of pupils from sampled schools.

Ultimately, twenty-five parents were interviewed using a semi-structured list of questions (see Appendix C), reflecting the diverse educational experiences of differing South Asian groups.

Parent interviews began in August of 1997, with the last of the interviews carried out in March of 1998. Interviews were also part conducted in various South Asian languages and dialects; namely Mirpuri, Punjabi and Urdu, and were tape-recorded. Interviews ranged in length from one hour to as many as two or three. Occupational positions of parents ranged from entrepreneurs and medical doctors, to factory workers, taxi drivers and the unemployed. They also varied in age, national origin and gender.

It is recognised that South Asians live in varying levels of prosperity and, as such, the extent to which 'a traditional English education' has been eulogised reveals itself in distinct forms in relation to Birmingham South Asian parents. In particular, English universities are regarded highly, a perspective based largely on a colonial education system and other remnants left by the British in South Asia. It has been stated that 'an Indian parent from an urban area, with a higher education even though working in an unskilled job, may expect his son to do well in school; while a rural, semi-literate parent might regard the fact that his children attend school as a major achievement' (Tomlinson, 1984, p. 34). Therefore, it was important to interview differing South Asian parents to draw out their perceptions of and attitudes towards their children in education. The sample of parents, although relatively small, does provide variations by ethnicity and social class, reflecting the types of schools and students sampled in this study. From the start of the parent interviews process until the last of the parent interviews, an entire twelve months had passed. Such was the length of time it took to overcome difficulties and to ensure that a representative sample of South Asian parents was ultimately ascertained.

3.3.4 Sampled Teachers

It has been argued teacher opinions and values are important to evaluate, especially given the vastly divergent academic and vocational routes taken by school pupils and college students in the last decade (Tomlinson, 1997). The interviewing of teachers began in November of 1998 and ended in March of 1999. Respondents were interviewed during school hours using a semi-structured list of questions (see Appendix D).

However, there were some difficulties experienced in interviewing teachers. St. Aiden's School decided its further involvement with the study was not longer obligatory and so effectively pulled out. In addition, the contact teachers from James Watt and Cherrywood colleges changed employment. To counterbalance the limited numbers, other teachers were purposively sampled from schools with similar characteristics. Interviews were carried out with primarily schools heads, principals and other senior teachers from the sampled schools and colleges. Altogether, twenty-three teachers were interviewed, eight of which were sampled from other schools.

Teacher respondents ranged in status and years of experience. The teachers interviewed made detailed statements on the nature of South Asian educational achievements. Teachers expanded upon questions relating to parents, religion and the culture of pupils. There were, however, potential hazards by interviewing teachers in this way. Given the subject matters explored, teachers were likely to understand researcher objectives. As such, teachers may have informed the researcher only part of all the information felt important, especially if the researcher is seen to take away sensitive information, potentially never to return. It was important, nevertheless, to work out whether teachers were telling the truth but also whether they were party to any untruths (Denscombe, 1984). Table 3.6 below profiles the teacher sample.

Table 3.6 Profile of teacher sample

No.	School/College	Status	Gender	Ethnicity	Status
1	Inner City School ^A	Comprehensive	Male	White	Senior Teacher
2	Inner City School ^A	Comprehensive	Female	White	Head
3	Inner City School ^A	Comprehensive	Female	White	Teacher/Year 11 Coordinator
4	Inner City School ^B	Comprehensive	Male	African-Caribbean	Senior Teacher
5	Inner City School ^B	Comprehensive	Male	White	Senior Teacher
6	Cherrywood College	16-19	Male	Pakistani	Lecturer
7	Inner City School ^C	Comprehensive	Male	African-Caribbean	Head
8	Inner City School ^C	Comprehensive	Male	Sikh-Indian	Teacher/Year 9 Coordinator
9	Inner-City School ^D	Comprehensive	Male	White	Head
10	Cherrywood College	16-19	Male	Pakistani	Assistant Principal
11	Longlake	Comprehensive	Male	White	Deputy Head
12	New Heath	Comprehensive	Male	White	Deputy Head
13	Omega High	Independent	Female	White	Head
14	Psi Grove	Grammar	Male	Sikh-Indian	Head of Physics
15	Psi Grove	Grammar	Male	White	Deputy Head
16	Rosebud	Grammar	Female	White	Head of Sixth Form
17	Rosebud	Grammar	Female	White-European	Head
18	Rosebud	Grammar	Female	White	Teacher
19	Rosebud	Grammar	Female	White	Teacher
20	St Margaret's	16-19	Male	White	Sciences Teacher
21	St Margaret's	16-19	Male	White	Vice Principal
22	St Margaret's	16-19	Female	White	Head of Department
23	St Margaret's	16-19	Female	White	Senior Teacher

Inner city comprehensive schools A, B, C and D were used to supplement study school and college teacher interviews.

It was felt by the researcher, nevertheless, many of the contact teachers were committed to this research from very early on, and after almost four years of positive co-operation, the willingness of teachers to have made inaccurate value judgements or claims, towards the end of the research, was felt to have been limited. All the interviewed teachers provided forthright responses to probing questions in an open manner. Teachers expressed a genuine desire actively engage with the research and to help improve their knowledge of South Asian pupils in education. Their views, nevertheless, were counterbalanced with those of other senior teachers from other similar schools. It allowed for greater research objectivity in the long run.

After all the interviews with teachers had been completed, an additional Likert attitude-scale questionnaire was handed out to teachers from four of the sampled schools. The aim was to maintain an element of critical distance as well as to buttress the range of would-be teacher respondents given also the relatively small but selective sample of interviews. Five of the sampled schools except St Aiden's School and only St Margaret's of the three colleges were provided questionnaires. Attempts made to further encourage the other contact teachers to assist were to no avail. The closeness of examinations at that time of year and perhaps an element of research fatigue may well have led to teachers assuming no further contact with the researcher until the dissemination of the research.

Only four of the sampled schools had replied by the end of July 1999. By that stage it was felt no further primary data was needed. A letter was written to all the remaining contact teachers and they were informed they would be informed once the research was complete. In sum, 67 successfully completed responses were obtained from teachers in five of the six sampled schools (see questionnaire in Appendix *E*).

The types of teachers interviewed were diverse. It was found that 38 per cent

[24/64] of teachers had been employed less than four years and 23 per cent [15/64] employed between five and nine years. It was an interesting finding, given the overwhelming proportion of the sample was over the age of forty. Merely eight per cent [5/64] of the respondents had been employed for more than twenty years. Fifty-eight per cent of the total sample was female in origin.

It is clear that there was an overwhelming preponderance of teachers from selective schools in the survey [64 per cent]. It is a little reflective of the sampled school pupils of which, 47 per cent were from selective schools. The majority of the teacher sampled from Rosebud, Psi Grove and Omega High schools were white women. The New Heath School teacher sample was the most ethnically diverse. Table 3.7 below shows the ethnicity and gender of the teachers responding to the survey.

Table 3.7 Teacher survey respondents: ethnicity, gender and sampled school

Ethnic Group	Gender	Rosebud (%)	Psi Grove (%)	New Heath (%)	Omega High (%)	Total (%)
White	Male	1 (11)	14 (82)	6 (25)	2 (12)	23 (34)
	Female	8 (89)	2 (12)	10 (42)	14 (82)	34 (51)
White-Other	Male	-	-	2 (8)	-	2 (3)
	Female	-	1 (6)	1 (4)	1 (6)	3 (5)
Pakistani	Male	-	-	2 (8)	-	2 (3)
	Female	-	-	1 (4)	-	1 (2)
Indian	Male	-	-	1 (4)	-	1 (2)
British-Indian*	Female	-	-	1 (4)	-	1 (2)
Total		9 (100)	17 (100)	24 (100)	17 (100)	67 (100)

*Category is self-ascribed.

It would be useful to draw attention to the main points concerning data gathering and analysis. It has been stated that qualitative open-ended interviewing was the principal method of enquiry used in this study. There were, however, also two closed-ended self-completed questionnaires used to supplement the qualitative interviews. The important interview-based and survey-based approach helped to explore, through many actors, the

individual educational life cycle experiences of South Asians from a variety of perspectives. The roles of pupils, parents and teachers can be explored and analysed heterogeneously to understand the wider variables in operation.

It is with great care that respondents were interviewed and surveyed using recognised social science research methods (Wilson, 1998). Every aspect of the data gathering process was rigorously scrutinised and piloted on volunteers before execution. Matters were further compounded when after each interviewing or surveying stage, a great deal of time was needed to transcribe, collate, code, deconstruct and analyse the data. To assist in the analysis of such a large set of data, qualitative and quantitative computer software packages were used, namely Atlas Ti and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientists). As such, this research is considered a comprehensive study of South Asians in education in Birmingham, taking into full account the variables of social class, school effect, ethnicity, gender, religion and culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY SCHOOLING AND TRANSITION TO SECONDARY

4.1 Introduction

There are a number of explanations offered for the differential educational performance levels of children from ethnic minority groups. Antiracist educationists argue institutional racism in society is fundamental and consequently school ethos, structure and teacher attitudes are of great importance to this debate (Williams, 1985; Troyna and Williams, 1986; Sarup, 1991). The multicultural educationist explanation sees educational inequality as a reflection of the norms, values and beliefs of ethnic minority communities, such that educational underachievement is simply a factor of ethnicity (Verma and Pumfrey, 1988; Verma and Mallick, 1988). This chapter explores the views and aspirations of pupils, students, parents and teachers towards early schooling and the transitional processes leading to secondary school entry.

4.2 Early schooling

When asking selective school pupils about early schooling, responses did not vary significantly at all between South Asians. Statements provided by respondents offered a largely neutral interaction with teachers. As one Pakistani year twelve girl from Rosebud School questioned, 'you don't even see colour then... do you... when you're that young'. All the selective school respondents felt they had recognised ethnic minority numbers rising as they proceeded through the school. The observation was corroborated from evidence of Rosebud School attendance numbers and through interviews from Psi Grove School.

A Sikh year eleven girl at Rosebud School accepted that her time in primary school was positive and she formed constructive relationships with colleagues of all

ethnicities. It was said of her preparatory school,

[There were] very few Muslims and Hindus – a few Muslims than anything else... In the nursery, the new children coming in were more Hindus and Muslims – higher up where I was when I left there were mainly Sikh... Because the classes weren't very big, everyone was friends with everybody really. I mean my best friend was Kerry, she was a white girl, and then I used to go around with a black girl called Natasha – we were quite close all of us.

Similarly, a Pakistani year ten girl from New Heath accepted the primary school she attended was helpful to her and she felt she made good progress. She stated, ‘I actually got on quite well with all the teachers... I loved sciences. I loved English especially.’ The overwhelming tendency was for both selective and comprehensive school pupils to evoke neutrality in earlier relationships with teachers and schools. Pupils may have had genuine difficulty in recalling experiences, which for them were negative or out of place.

Turning attention to college students, it was asked of respondents whether they had at all attended nursery. Fifty-five per cent [60/109]^o said they did and 45 per cent [49/109] said they did not (with two responses missing). Table 4.1 below shows the age at which respondents began nursery. Two-thirds of respondents started nursery at the age of three.

Table 4.1 College students: start age at nursery

Age	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Two	-	1 (4)	-	1 (2)
Three	2 (67)	18 (67)	19 (63)	39 (65)
Four	1 (33)	7 (26)	11 (37)	19 (32)
Five	-	1 (4)	-	1 (2)
Total	3 (100)	27 (100)	30 (100)	60 (100)

For those not attending nursery, there were a number of interesting observations. Here, eighty per cent of Bangladeshis in the sample [12/15] had not attended a nursery [all

^oFrequencies are shown in square brackets.

eight of the Bangladeshi boys and four of the seven girls]. A great deal can be explained by the fact that some stated they had received most of their early education in Bangladesh and so began late in the English education system, essentially because of this later migration. It was also found that 40 per cent of the total Bangladeshi college student sample [6/15] was Bangladeshi-born. A Bangladeshi male respondent noted, 'I didn't attend nursery because I came late into this country', adding further, he did not enjoy his junior school 'because I couldn't speak English'. Table 4.2 shows college student attitudes towards infant schooling and Table 4.3 highlights attitudes towards junior schooling.

Table 4.2 College students: attitude towards infant school

Infant School	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Very Enjoyable	8 (75)	20 (53)	19 (38)	47 (47)
Good	1 (8)	13 (72)	15 (30)	29 (29)
Fair	1 (8)	2 (5)	9 (18)	12 (12)
Reasonably Positive	2 (17)	3 (8)	7 (14)	12 (12)
	12 (100)	38 (100)	50 (100)	100 (100)

Table 4.3 College students: attitude towards junior school

Junior School	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Very Enjoyable	8 (53)	20 (51)	23 (44)	51 (48)
Good	4 (27)	11 (28)	11 (21)	26 (25)
Fair	1 (7)	4 (10)	12 (23)	17 (16)
Reasonably Positive	2 (13)	1 (3)	5 (10)	8 (8)
Not Good	-	2 (5)	1 (2)	3 (3)
Very Bad*	-	1 (3)	-	1 (1)
	15 (100)	39 (100)	52 (100)	106 (100)

*Category is self-ascribed.

Not a single college student expressed dislike towards their infant (aged 3-7) and junior (aged 7-11) [primary] schooling and only a few [4/106] stated that had not considered it in anything less than a positive light. The findings equate with the sampled pupils who also considered their early schooling positively. A questionnaire statement written by a Hindu girl from James Watt College is typical of this sentiment,

I really enjoyed J and I school where my environment was very multi-cultural and happy. I got a lot of support in primary and secondary education in school and by my family. Teachers were aware of cultural differences as well as religious ones, and were informed...

Overall, South Asian pupils from both selective and comprehensive schools felt they enjoyed primary schooling. For the college students, responses were similar. It was found from the college student survey, however, that many of the Bangladeshis were not born in England and because of later entry into the English schooling system, they had been at a disadvantage. Here, there is a clear Bangladeshi difference in relation to the other South Asians. Nevertheless, it was also evident from the analysis of early schooling, pupil and student respondents may not have been able to talk of discrimination in critical terms because they may not have recognised it occurring or having affected them in any way.

4.3 Transition into selective schools

The following section explores the ways in which pupils were 'prepared' for selective (independent and grammar) school entry and how it differed from the experiences of pupils from comprehensive schools.

A Sikh year thirteen boy from Psi Grove School stated he received 'outside help' two months before the 11+ examination. A Hindu year eleven boy from Psi Grove School added, 'I wanted to pass it obviously. I'd been working so hard so I thought that I might as well go for it'. A Sikh year twelve girl from Rosebud School said in her preparatory school,

Everybody did the 11+... I had some extra tuition from one of my teachers at school – we went to her house after school every hour. This was for a term really... Four came here a couple went to the high school ['Omega High' boys and girls] and I think 4 or 5 boys passed.

She added her parents had also helped,

My parents got me these 11+ books. I liked working at that point, I don't know why. Because a lot of the stuff we did at school was quite 11+ orientated like doing similes and all this in English – I mean it wasn't totally different to what we had been doing in classes – like it was just extra work.

An East African Muslim year twelve girl from Rosebud School also elaborated on how she was coached for entry into selective school. She stated she had a tutor to assist her training for the 11+. The period of tuition lasted, 'I think it was about three or four months'.

Only a handful of selective school pupils said they received little or no training in preparation for the 11+ examination [6/42]. The vast majority reported they had spent a considerable time in training [30/42]. The use of tutors employed outside of school time was also widely stated. Furthermore, the ability of certain preparatory schools to provide preparation helped pupils more as part of their general organisational structure. In terms of ethnicity and gender, of the South Asian girls from the 30 (six Pakistanis, 14 Indian, seven East African Asian and three Bangladeshis) in either independent or grammar schools, only 12 were Muslim. There was no Bangladeshi boy in the sample of 12 from Psi Grove School and only one Bangladeshi girl entered Rosebud School after passing the 11+ examination. The two other Bangladeshi girls at Rosebud School entered for their A levels (16+). Altogether, only 16 out of the 42 in independent and grammar schools were Muslim. The remainder were either Sikh and Hindu Indians or East African Gujarati speaking Hindus or Muslims.

In contrast to the above pupils, the comments below highlight the views and aspirations of pupils from the three comprehensive schools. The following is an analysis of 47 out of the 89 and many variances were found from the sample. Here, certain South

Asian pupils showed a lack of interest in independent or grammar schooling *per se*; many respondents held the view that these schools were too divergent from the apparently normal schooling found everywhere else. A Pakistani year eleven girl from Longlake School noted, 'I didn't want to go to grammar school. I don't like going to far places and grammar schools are usually very far'.

A Sikh year eleven girl from Longlake School stated that she took the 11+ examination while attending an inner city primary school. She stated, 'I went through books and things but I didn't have a tutor... my dad got like books on English and Maths and Science specifically for the 11+ and I just worked on them'. Like many other pupils from comprehensive schools, a certain degree of apprehension was felt towards selective schools. For this respondent choosing Longlake School was a definitive choice. Asked about her feelings towards grammar schools, she added,

I knew what it was but I didn't really want to go to grammar school... I just didn't want to go... I hear people were saying that they didn't really like things like that [pause] and I already knew people that came to this school so I wanted to come here.

A Pakistani (Shia) year twelve girl from New Heath School felt that her preparation for selective school was not mandatory. She argued, 'dad was considering it but I considered going to a girls school [and] I was totally against it. Because, I think ahead, there are not many universities when you get a chance for single-sex education... so when I work with males it would be much harder. So I thought I would learn at an early age'.

In many cases, pupils stated they were aware of selective schools but did not wish to attend because they preferred to go to local schools with their friends and that these *other* schools were regimental or overtly strict. A small number of the Bangladeshi

boys and one girl in particular said that they were not aware of independent or grammar schools at all and as such had not prepared for entry.

College students were also asked whether they were involved in the 11+ examination process. It was interesting to note the high proportions of both Indian and Pakistani respondents seeking selective school entry; nevertheless, Indians were far most likely to have taken tests and Bangladeshis the least. The Bangladeshis were also the most likely to have 'wished they had done this' [6/13]. A small number of the whole college student sample expressed little if any knowledge of the processes involved [20/102]. By religious classification, although the sample was small, Hindus were more likely to have opted for independent and grammar schooling with Muslims (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis) indicating they 'wished they had done this'. Those that had taken the 11+ examination and failed [42/109] were asked to elaborate upon how their parents had been involved. Eight-one per cent [34/42] said their parents were either 'highly motivated' or 'enthusiastic'. However, 40 per cent of the Pakistanis said they were 'not assisted at all' [8/20], whereas half of the Indians in the sample had a sibling or a relative to help them [9/18]. Because very few of the college student respondents had been through selective schooling there were no written comments on this transitional phase.

South Asian parents were asked about their roles in determining the nature of their children's secondary school entry. Parents that were involved closely tended to be unambiguous about their motivations towards selective schooling. The basis for this rested primarily with their social class positions. Middle class South Asian parents in petit bourgeoisie and professional employment positions were better able to prepare their children for selective school entry. Hindu and Sikh Indians dominated the more advantaged positions in this educational transition.

A middle class East African Bohra¹ Muslim father [8][°] sent his two sons to an independent school early on in their lives. The parents 'knew of the school... and the school was not far away. We did think that perhaps our children would be better because the staff-pupil ratio would be more helpful'. The parents chose a school taking pupils from the age of 'two and a half years'. Pupils were moved from preparatory through to middle schooling until the age of eight. Children were subsequently tested to see if they could proceed to the main school up to the age of eleven. Either they remained until eighteen or they took other tests in the hope of entering other selective schools. Asking the father whether he had made any extra effort in preparing his children, he said,

I mean we did... have one or two schools in mind that we would like them to go... and the tests for those schools. The tests were rather old fashioned... and we prepared them.

Both sons successfully passed the common grammar school entrance and independent school examinations. The parents nonetheless opted for independent school entry, the father saying, 'even though we had to pay fees'. They chose the school because of its strong reputation and record of achievement (the equivalent 'Omega High for boys'). The father added that paying the fees for his two sons was 'sometimes a little difficult'. Notwithstanding, he felt the facilities were strong and music and sporting opportunities were impressive. In addition, the school was not far from their home.

Other reasons for deciding on selective schooling at the age of eleven included a belief that state schools were unable to provide an education sufficient to their

¹ The Bohra (Shia) Muslims maintain a particular cultural identity. They can be recognised by distinct community characteristics; namely, belonging to the commercial classes and retaining strong religious organisations. Much of this is derived from historical antecedents in relation to contact with Hindus along with location in the Gujarat region of India. Sojourning in East Africa before immigration to Britain, these Muslims are distinctive in their ways and operate in a sophisticated micro-society (Agrawal, 1978).

[°] Numbers in square brackets refer to the sample parents as listed on p. 65.

children's academic development. Parents here stressed the importance of 'standards'. A comment made by a professional Hindu mother [21], with two daughters at Omega High School, was characteristic of many parents here, 'there is no standard in the comprehensive school... children won't get anything at the end'.

A self-employed Bangladeshi father [4] living in an outer-area of Birmingham did not consider independent schooling for his three 'mixed-race' children (at the time of the study, at Psi Grove and Rosebud schools). He, like other parents, was keen instead to ensure grammar school entry and used the services of tutors to reinforce his children's chances. He stated,

I'm a bit funny in that respect. I sort of see myself... that... why should one pay for these things. We pay enough taxes and all these things and I just didn't believe in it. I just thought we fight until we get our place. But because the children got in [Rosebud and Psi Grove], I just didn't come across it... but I don't think that I would have sent them to private. I just don't believe in private things. It has its own ethos and its own politics. Somehow, I just don't subscribe to that.

On the need for tutors, he further clarified,

They started very early. They started about nine. I would say about half an hour a week, that's how they started. Generally, as time progressed, it sort of increased in quantity and amount of practise. Tutor came about a year before, once a week. The whole thing was so hush hush because of Birmingham city council's policy was that No Tutoring! But it happens, they will not sort of confirm or encourage, they prefer to sweep it under the carpet rather than confront the problem. So as a result, all the headmasters were instructed "No Tutoring!"... and to discourage telling parents what books to buy...

What do parents do?

You either have parents who know how the system is working. And, there are a group of parents they don't know, until their child sort of just about gets ready for 11+ exams, then they realise they should have done this and they should have bought that sort of book. Its too late then you see. Its a total fog, so mystified, the whole system, the veil of secrecy is absolutely incredible... The alternative was to find a good comprehensive school. If we hadn't managed to secure one then obviously selling the house and moving to another place where they have a good comprehensive school. Yes. Education you know is top priority.

In general, parents that wanted entry into selective schools were eager to place their children at an early age. Parents that had made the decision to invest were hopeful they were choosing optimal paths for their children although competition for places remained high. Other South Asian parents with less aspiration for selective schooling *per se* were more enthusiastic about grammar school entry. These parents made a concerted effort in preparing their children, particularly with the use of private tutors.

For parents originating from lower social class backgrounds, experiences were different in a range of ways. An unemployed Pakistani father [17] of four (three sons and one daughter) talked of his eldest son's experiences at a Roman Catholic nursery when he was seeking his transfer to the infant school. He was informed that 'there was no place for his Muslim child'. The school was reputed to have said, 'we give priority to Roman Catholic pupils'. He believed the education provided at the school tended to be of a high quality status and this attracted other South Asian parents. He talked of the experiences of friends who had received similar notices telling them their children were no longer wanted, as priority was given to Roman Catholic children. He stated, 'where there are more white children and less Asian children... education there is going to be better' (*translated from Punjabi*). He continued,

I think that for most of our people, where there are less of our children and more of white children {obviously} the education standard there is going to be better. Where there are many of our children there is going to be a problem of language {Right!}. They try to speak in their own language, whether they speak Punjabi, Urdu, Gujerati, Bangla; our own people when they get together speak their own languages and some come home swearing.

Translated from Punjabi {} indicates original use of English.

This above Pakistani father was emblematic of many others like him. He argued the factors contributing to the failure of some South Asians were the act of bringing the culture of the home into local schools. The view was indicative of parents with positions

that were moving over time, and were being shaped by the transition from working educational class values towards middle class educational values, with a yearning for schools to reflect authentic English educational norms. In this case, it was because the father felt a school containing mostly white children would be more favourable.

In other cases, South Asian parents with children in comprehensive schools were content to send them to local schools as the norm. A part-time employed 'mixed-race' Pakistani mother [23] of three at St Aiden's School, said in relation to primary schooling, 'I was thinking of like the nearest to home... and that... but they did swap around a few times because I wasn't happy...' The reason for the altercation, it appeared, was because other pupils in the school had called her children 'racist names'. Eventually, her children settled at a local primary school invariably with higher ethnic minority numbers. She added on the current school, 'I'm not really happy with the schooling around here at all actually... for infants... but Thorpe Park [primary school] was the best one I could think of... like locally... I wasn't too keen on it at first, cos' then they came home with a lot of swearing'.

It was asked of her views towards selective schooling and what if any role she played or might have wished to play,

I would have liked them to do the 11+ and go grammar and all that. I couldn't see it happening financially. I wouldn't have been able to do it... with grammar school you need a lot of back-up I suppose, like they do extra tuition and all that lot, and there's not one close by, and there's travelling but it would have been nice... cos' children wanted to do it... I think.

An unemployed Pakistani father [14] of five with two sons at New Heath School added a comparable observation. Grammar school entry was seen to exist for the privileged few,

Not every child can go to a grammar school. This is a concern for all parents. For that you need to have tutors visit your home. I am uneducated myself; I have no money to pay for tutors because I am unemployed. Those that enter grammar school are children with parent's who are educated, who can support, who can provide tuition themselves, some are doctors, some are engineers, some are managers, some are whatever. It is the children of these parents that get tuition in the home and are those that can go to grammar school... {third class}... people like us, we are happy if our children make it to college. At the age of sixteen, either it is children that want to leave school or it is parents that remove them. The future of our children is quite bad, many are in gangs, they wander the streets, they smoke cigarettes, they do this, they do that... and if you cannot closely look after your children, there are so many traps that they can fall in.

Translated from Urdu {} indicates original use of English.

In summation, some affluent and more educated South Asians were able to accomplish their educational aspirations for their children by sending them to selective schools. A number of parents started independent education for their children at a very early age. For certain South Asian parents, selecting the most positive educational paths were practised. Parents tended to be highly enthusiastic about their children's success and kept a close eye on developments. Affluent parents had the capital and the knowledge to choose whichever type of early schooling they deemed appropriate. The process was also reinforced by the school pupil interviews, many of which highlighted certain instances of direct positive parental involvement in ensuring entry for their children into the selective education system at an early age.²

Parents were found to be differentially knowledgeable and equipped to access for their children selective schooling in all of its variant forms (Vincent, 1995; Thomas and McClelland, 1997; Ball and Vincent, 1998). Parents from lower social class backgrounds were far more reticent about their children's entry into independent or

² Research based on 659 parents interviewed on the streets in major English industrial cities showed that all parents favoured 'hard information' that helped them with decision making in relation to their children's education. It was also found that parents were more concerned with how their children were performing in their current school, and as such how they could help them directly (Thomas and McClelland, 1997).

grammar schools at a younger age and at the age of eleven when crucial examinations had to be passed before entry. The most determining factor here was thought to be social class. It would materialise although parents from lower social class backgrounds had the inclination to proceed with selective schooling they did not possess the social capital required (cf. Reay and Ball, 1997; 1998). Financial capital was also another factor; if cooperation between parents and children allowed pupils to gain entry into independent schools, it is not always recognised that parents might not be able to afford to send them. It is unambiguous that the way in which South Asian parents were able to send their children through selective schooling was by possessing the capital, knowledge and the resources acquired through their occupational, residential and social class positions. The way in which differentiated South Asians were reflected in the education system at large pointed towards their positions in society.

4.4 Teacher perspectives

Teachers were asked to give their views on the processes leading to selective education for some South Asians. Passing the 11+ examination was a highly sought after commodity and it was argued South Asian parents can often go to great lengths to try to ensure success. A Psi Grove School senior teacher [14]^o described it thus,

I come in for the 11+ tests and there is a very large number and there are a lot of Asian kids. You probably need to speak to senior management [for exact figures] but I think its probably... it wouldn't surprise me if its something close to 40-50 per cent, so it's a very large number but I think a lot of times the Asian parents put their children in without really realising that their kids can't cope, they just think lets go for it and the preparation is an aspect, more and more people are beginning to use private tutors outside.

Reinforcing the point made above, a white teacher [3] from an inner city comprehensive

^o Numbers in square brackets refers to the sampled teachers as listed on p. 68.

school advocated South Asian parents made every effort to get their children into selective schools but were often unsuccessful because of a lack of preparation,

That's right... and going back to the 11+ the whole idea of the various activities, the tests that they have to do, the prep schools are from a very early age training their pupils to do this 11+ but if you go to ABC Primary school none of the children there would have ever seen a past paper or previous verbal reasoning test and if a child in ABC gets entered to the exam because the parents want it they gonna sit there and think, "Ah, what's this?" Whereas someone who's been practising for five years already knows what's gonna be expected.

In contrast, an interesting observation made by one school head was on the nature of South Asian pupils entering his inner city comprehensive school. Because of the tight-knit nature of community structures, it was argued South Asian Muslim groups were invariably led to educational disadvantage. It was contended families were too closely located and participated in activities incongruent to the educational needs of children.³

The deputy head of Longlake School [11] disclosed,

This is not a racist perception; it's a practical view. Children have exposure to learning experiences through visits and things like that which are simply not part of the cultural behaviour of people within South Asian culture, where family and visiting family and being with family and holidays with family is the focus as opposed to going on visits to places. In the more successful South Asian children, it's changes in their pre-school and family behaviour that's actually making some of the difference so parents are taking them to museums and trips to places to broaden their experience and understanding and have got some of the understanding of what's needed pre-five, because it's the pre-five that's making the difference. So when we have, a significant proportion of our year seven in terms of their behaviour are still seven or eight and it's that child development. It's almost backwardness, this two years of child development to catch up which I suppose is one of the reasons why children stay on are more successful because they have that extra year to build up and move further forward. The first five years are absolutely vital and that's one of the reasons why our community focus has been put there because we genuinely believe that if we can get to parents and put input into parents that will eventually impact significantly on the achievement of the students and help them move forward.

³ Recent research on 5,000 ethnic minority pupils demonstrated that, 'the particular primary school a pupil attends has a significant effect on their progress during their early years [in secondary schools]' (Strand, 1999, p. 179).

4.5 Discussion

South Asian groups varied in their preference for educating their children. In general, pupils that managed to enter independent schools came from higher social class families although this was not the case for all grammar school pupils but for the vast majority. A crucial factor was the role of parents in preparing their children for entry into selective schools.

Of the South Asian groups in this study, Indian children were the most likely to attend grammar schools with Bangladeshis least. Other pupils felt selective schools unsuited because they were far from home and friends. The survey of college students also showed that Indians were the most likely to have taken the 11+ and Bangladeshis the least. Moreover, Indian students had the most assistance, especially from siblings and relatives. Pakistanis had the least help in preparation from anyone, including the schools they attended. Here, aspiring middle and higher social class parents, irrespective of South Asian ethnicity felt ordinary comprehensive school education would neither be suited for their children or possessed 'the standards'. Aspirant parents originating from poorer economic and social backgrounds felt the greatest type of schooling for their children would be found in schools with mainly white children. Other poorer South Asian parents felt obliged to send their children to local schools. They also felt, however, they had no real choice as they believed certain types of *other* schools were reserved for the privileged few from higher social class backgrounds. Furthermore, less likely were both parents of pupils in comprehensive schools to be in full-time employment. Neither were parents here equipped with the financial resources to put their children through the selective education system even though they may well have had the intention.

Overall, the move from early schooling to entry into selective schools indicated

South Asian groups experienced these processes differentially. With the assistance of parents, and based on various measures taken, pupils were positive about their primary schooling. In the transition to secondary schooling, parents that were from lower social class backgrounds felt they had neither the capital nor the knowledge to help their children. Although attempts made by parents were to succeed some of them were unsuccessful due to inadequate preparation for the tests. Divisions between South Asian groups were along the lines of socio-economic status and migration histories.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUBJECT CHOICE: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the way in which South Asian children proceed through certain crucial stages of secondary schooling. These relate to questions and issues arising out of setting, subject selection at 13, the role of parents, and teacher perceptions of the parents of children. In essence, pupil and student setting and the events leading to GCSE choices are analysed here.¹ There is an attempt to discover whether initial setting has the potential to influence eventual educational outcome.

In an early study on the effects of streaming in schools by the late Barry Troyna, it was found ethnic minority groups were likely to form educational aspirations congruent to their set positions. African-Caribbeans in the top sets formed an identity that helped to shape their eventual positions in high-status educational and occupational positions, shedding a 'colour' identity and forming reflecting their peers in the higher sets. Conversely, African-Caribbeans located in the lower sets formed relationships with other African-Caribbeans that were also concentrated in the lower streams. The interests of these African-Caribbeans subsequently emerged antithetical to the interests of those in the higher groups. Therefore, individuals located in the lower streams were more likely to form social and cultural friendship-networks that exploited their identity differences from those in higher sets as well as acting in opposition to them (Troyna, 1978; see also Weis, 1985).

In another similar study on the selection of GCSE subjects, it was found that 13-

¹ There are subtle differences between streaming and setting. Each approximates to the way in which apparently brighter pupils are placed in different subject sets to others; in different forms and subject classes. Schools differ in their use of such methods. Others apply it for some subjects and not others.

plus science subject choices made by South Asian boys were unexpected given the limited exposure they might have had of 'science knowledge', compared with their white counterparts. The net effect was to drive South Asians towards higher science educational goals. It was understood 'their good performance in science may just be part of a positive orientation towards education in general' (Kelly, 1988, pp. 124-5). It was also offered that girls selected subjects at 14 and 16 largely based on cultural factors, with parents expressing certain educational aspirations but allowing their daughters some freedom to decide. Other research on 13-plus subject selection, by ethnic minorities in particular, has also shown 'different groups have different perspectives of the importance of future careers as contrasted with enjoyment of academic interests' (Woodrow, 1996, p. 35).

5.2 Setting and GCSE choice

For South Asians in selective schools, groups were not immediately separated into potential ability. In year nine, different ability groups in Mathematics and English formally surfaced in many of the schools in the study. Selective school respondents were asked about the factors that motivated them to choose the subjects they finally took. A range of responses are highlighted below from grammar school respondents,

Firstly, friend was out of the question. I knew that what I am going to do is going to be different from everyone else. At the end of the day, I wanted to do what I enjoyed first.

Hindu boy, Year 12, Psi Grove School

Most of the subjects I wanted to take were already compulsory... core subjects... Sciences and Maths. I took two languages because I enjoyed them.

Pakistani boy, Year 12, Psi Grove School

There wasn't any pressure from my parents. It was what I wanted to do. There wasn't all that much of a choice. It was either Geography or History. There wasn't an influence from anyone really.

East African Indian Muslim girl, Year 12, Rosebud School

A Sikh year thirteen girl from Rosebud School articulated many of the choices were pre-determined by an inclination towards the science subjects. She stated,

The only choice I think you really got was whether you did French or German... or whether you did History or Geography... or double award sciences. I wasn't really bothered... but I have always being orientated scientifically so straight away I decided I wanted to do a double award.

An East African Muslim year twelve girl from Rosebud School commented on what motivated her in selecting her GCSE subjects. The statement below is representative of many from selective schools. In this case, there was also a wish to study Islamic Studies at GCSE level. The latter was influenced by forces outside of Rosebud School,

I did separate sciences, French, History, Geography, and Classics. Yeah, my parents wanted me to do the sciences, because my Dad is a Pharmacist and my Mom is a Radiographer. And so, they wanted me to try something in the sciences, you know medicine. So they say, "you do the sciences". But I was going to do it anyway and... Yeah... I want a career in medicine so... Every teacher wanted me to do their subjects... well most of them... and so it was difficult to chose. Because I thought that some of the teachers would say that, "no don't do this", because you won't be able to cope with it or something. But they've all said you'll be able to do it... able to do it fine... sort off made it more complicated, if you see what I mean.

I am also doing Islamic Studies out of school and I might do Arabic as well. I'm doing the coursework, I don't know whether I'll take the GCSE. I sort of go to the Sunday school thing. It's not much, one lesson a week, couple of hours a week, we all do the work in the class so it's Okay.

For the following East African Muslim year eleven girl at Rosebud School and the selection of her GCSE subjects, 'there wasn't any pressure from my parents... it was what I wanted to do and... there wasn't all that much of a choice. It was either geography or history... you couldn't take both... which was what I wanted to do... so I chose history... and things like music, business information systems, things like that. But, my friends did mainly things that I did, there wasn't an influence from anyone really'. Altogether there were ten GCSE subjects 'because I chose general studies as an

extra. I would have preferred to do geography and history but that wasn't an option'.

The comprehensive schools in the study, St Aiden's, New Heath and Longlake schools, all adopted an *apparent* setting free policy for the first two years of secondary schooling. Nevertheless, although schools demonstrated no setting policy existed, it was clear 'informal setting' was prevalent. Moreover, differences emerged in Mathematics and English setting reflecting observable academic potential. In terms of GCSE selection, comprehensive school pupils tended not to concentrate on science subjects; for example, Art and Design were preferred by girls, Business Studies and Information Technology by boys.

General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) subjects were taken in conjunction with other GCSE and A level subjects in all the comprehensive schools. Some pupils were found to be sitting additional GCSEs in Islamic studies or a South Asian language (Gujarati, Urdu, and Bengali), inside or outside of schools.² Those pupils who did not take additional modern language or religious studies subjects were at least familiar with the possibilities of taking them. In this study, pupils who started in the higher sets tended to remain and ultimately achieved very well. Some of the girls and the boys from the grammar schools felt they were able to move up after extra effort believing at first they had been placed in streams lower they ought to have been.

² It is important to elaborate upon the way in which bilingual pupils perceive their first and second languages. Based on research conducted in Birmingham, it was found that there was pressure by Punjabi speaking Sikh parents put on their children to develop an accurate use of the language. However, children were unable to develop their language use in accordance with parent wishes, but instead developed a preference for English. The move was reinforced by the use of English within schools. Fifty school pupils were interviewed in both Punjabi and English from five infant schools, originating from a strong Sikh community in Smethwick (Birmingham). It was found that when 'pupils feel negatively about their literacy they are likely to compromise their academic achievement'. As such, 'a first step would be to recognise and disseminate the good practise which is going on... where learner's home language is recognised and used not only in the classroom but in the curriculum as a vehicle for learning, and where there is development of multiliteracies in the classroom' (Martin and Stuart-Smith, 1998, p. 253).

College students were also asked questions about setting. Almost half of all respondents [54/109] recognised their setting in secondary school. Table 5.1 below shows how students felt about their parent's attitudes towards their setting.

Table 5.1 College students: parent attitude towards streaming

Parent Attitudes	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
They Were Happy With It	-	10 (50)	16 (55)	26 (48)
I Did Not Tell Them Until The School Reports Were Sent Home	2 (40)	6 (30)	5 (17)	13 (24)
Didn't Bother Them One Bit In The Slightest	2 (40)	1 (5)	6 (21)	9 (17)
They Were Really Upset And Wanted Me To Do Better	1 (20)	3 (15)	1 (3)	5 (9)
Didn't Realise	-	-	1 (3)	1 (2)
Total	5 (100)	20 (100)	29 (100)	54 (100)

The South Asian group with parents least satisfied with streaming were the Bangladeshis (although cell sizes are small). The majority of Pakistanis and Indians said their parents were satisfied.

College student respondents replied in diverse ways to the question of setting in secondary schools. A Pakistani student from James Watt College emphasised the issue of moving up or down sets. He wrote,

Yes, I can remember that whilst being at [ABC] School in my third year I had improved a set from two. I went up to set one which was the highest set. I was very grateful for this but the teaching did not suit me.

Another Pakistani male student from James Watt College went to greater lengths to express his feelings on the system of setting and related it to the way in which it sometimes impinged further academic development. He wrote in some detail,

I don't think pupils should be placed in sets or bands at secondary schools because I found that many of my friends who were placed in the lower bands, lacked motivation and the highest possible grade that they could achieve was a D due to them being entered for the foundation paper. This did not give them a chance to get a grade C or above (some were capable of getting a C at least). I also think the Double Science Award should be changed (scraped) by the exam boards to Single Award, because the content of Chemistry, Biology and

Physics is very limiting and basic, especially chemistry. In Double Award the concept of the mole is not covered at all making it harder for students who study chemistry at A level, who haven't a clue about the mole. This makes it very difficult for them to understand the basics of chemistry. This is also true of Biology as well. Students should be well prepared for A levels, because GCSE to A level is a very big jump, if not the right material has been studied at GCSE, the first year of A levels can be very demanding and stressful.

Also greater amount of time should be spent on maths, because the % of retakes at colleges is extremely high. Teachers should make sure 95% of the pupils obtain their GCSE Maths at school.

I think relevant and useful work should be studied at GCSE as I personally have experienced problems with aspects of my A levels, especially by Science Subjects.

I think colleges should take people who have achieved excellent GCSE grades, e.g., As and Bs at the limit for A levels. They should have strict entry requirements, e.g., maths must be passed before they start A level courses. Colleges should stop thinking about the money they receive for each student they let on the course and should put money to use by getting more things (e.g. learning resources centres). They should also concentrate on getting the highest possible grades for each student in the college and getting the pass rate above 95%.

College students were asked which of the reasons stated below best described their motivation for selecting their GCSE subjects. Table 5.2 below shows the factors influencing college students when choosing certain GCSEs at the age of 13 or 14.

Table 5.2 College students: factors relating to GCSE choice

Gcse Factors	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Those Subjects That I Was Really Good At	5 (31)	16 (43)	21 (40)	42 (40)
Favourite Subjects	8 (50)	13 (35)	16 (30)	37 (35)
Long Term Career Goals	1 (6)	6 (16)	11 (21)	18 (17)
Friends Choices	2 (30)	1 (3)	2 (4)	5 (5)
Parental Pressure	-	-	2 (4)	2 (2)
Favourite Teachers	-	1 (3)	1 (4)	2 (2)
Total	16 (100)	37 (100)	53 (100)	106 (100)

College students were also asked whether they had to 'keep their parents happy with the choices made'. Sixty-three per cent of the respondents said 'yes'. Subjects were chosen based on those 'most liked' and those they felt 'best at'. Pakistanis were more likely to say they 'had to keep parents happy'. Most of the respondents agreed the advice given to

them by their teachers was indifferent from that received by other white pupils. Given the opportunity, Indians were least likely and Muslims (Pakistanis and Bangladeshis) most likely to take additional GCSE subjects.

A part of the analysis here is the extent to which choice is seen to exist at all. The type of school affected how subject choices were structured. Core curriculum subjects were a given and less prescriptive choice was limited because of timetable and teacher resources. There were distinct differences between the opportunities each school had to offer. Pupils in the selective schools normally sat up to 10 GCSEs with greater depth in the sciences but pupils in comprehensive schools invariably choose up to eight subjects with vocational courses supplementing GCSE subjects.

A number of the comprehensive school pupils claimed that they did not realise they had been set at all. Most of the pupils who believed they had been set stated parents were aware of the situation and were in general contented. The college students elaborated further along the same lines. Here, it is important to remember that effectively all the college students in the survey comprised of former comprehensive school pupils (89 per cent). Those in the lower set placements were more likely to be Bangladeshi and Pakistani males; who were also more likely to express some concern with teacher expectations. Here too, it is seen differences between South Asian groups develop further as well as the fact of gender also beginning to affect South Asian pupil/student attitude towards and experience of education.

5.3 Parent involvement

In this study, it was often conveyed by parents from higher social class backgrounds that selective schools had greatest power in influencing the educational paths to be taken by their children. Educational achievements were well proven in these schools and parents

had a propensity to not question decisions made by such schools. The comment below from a professional Muslim father [8] with children at 'Omega High for boys' is archetypal of a recognition of the belief in the importance of personal development as a central goal rather than merely securing high-income employment as an eventual end.

He stated,

To be honest, we thought they were taught what they were taught. They had found out what they were interested in and they chose their subjects, the both of them. Although the second one tried to advise my younger one that some subjects would be more difficult but he chose the ones he wanted. We left it because we thought if we do interfere, and they were not happy, it would be two factors. At least it was their choice and then they didn't feel that we had pressurised them or anything.

A professional Hindu father [21] was able to send his only son to an independent school from the age of eight to eighteen. He added ensuring his son was able to obtain the most from education meant having to 'make sacrifices'. The quotation below is the respondent's reflection of a conversation he had with his son, who at the time was a young boy,

I would leave home at about a quarter to eight in the morning – he wouldn't get home until six-half-six at night – because I would pick him up and drop him off – and he would say to me, Dad, "you know, I'm working all these hours, and all the kids in the street, they are playing out", etc. And I said well that's fine but what you have to think about is that in the future, if you make the best of what you have in terms of opportunities, then these kids are the ones who are going to be manual labourers or have mediocre jobs. What you could do is to go the top and he seemed to accept that, and it wasn't a forced issue, it was an explanation! For every decision to make, there is always a negative side to it – that was the negative side for him.

A discussion about the nature of his son's independent schooling developed more explicitly. He was asked how the intellectual expectations generated by the school affected family life within the home,

In the year that he took his GCSEs, he came number eight in the country. What I will say is that, it is not sufficient to put a child in a private school. That will not help them as much. Need to create the right environment at home, it has gotta be; encouragement and discipline if necessary. You have to take an interest in what they are doing, you yourself have to be able to answer some of the questions that they are going to put to you – because they learn very very fast – in these private schools – and somehow we managed to get the right balance at home, so that he had the best opportunities to make the most of what he had.

The idea of parents ‘managing’ their children’s education was emphasised further by a middle class Bangladeshi father [4] with children at Rosebud and Psi Grove schools. He indicated how easy it was for parents to relive their own high educational aspirations through their children,

I don't want to live my ambitions... reliving through them. I don't want to go into that trap. I give total freedom to my children.

Why does this happen?

I suppose it goes back to the Indian subcontinent, the way I see it, they way I receive all the signals talking to the parents, to study medicine carries higher status and that it is to think in old terms. In ten years time, what sort of status the medical people will have I don't know...

He added notable figures in the history of India, who were influential in changing the political map of the world, had all been educated in elite English schools and universities, ‘Ghandi was a barrister, Nehru was a barrister... [Jinnah was a barrister]’.

Parents from lower social class backgrounds expressed a level of involvement albeit distinct in its orientation towards dealing with 13-plus subject choices. An unemployed Bangladeshi father [7] with children in comprehensive schools stated, ‘well, before they chose, we discussed the thing and then we decided which they should take and which subjects they should not take. We went through a discussion’. One parent felt he had to be more direct with choices. An unemployed Pakistani father [14] of four told of his influences upon his eldest son,

I told him, especially the big one, to pick those subjects that are {the main... because you are going into medicine... this was my wish. But when I saw that he didn't want to know. He said that, "{as a training doctor you have to work long hours and so on. And that all Asian people want their son to be doctors and nothing else}". For this reason, I stayed quiet. I suppose this was fine. I tell the others do something with a scope that is {worldwide} in approach. We'll see what the others do.

Translated from Punjabi {} indicates original use of English

Findings concerning parental influence on 13 + choices here echoed those from pupils and students. Working-class parents tended to exert as great an influence as possible whereas middle-class parents were more prepared to let their children in conjunction with schools determine eventual choice.

Studies of Sikh parents have found their aspirations towards high professional status occupations are because of a strong cultural orientation. Indeed, Sikh women have been established in English society much longer than their South Asian Muslim counterparts (Bhachu, 1991). Based on different economic and social distinctions, Indian women as working mothers provide a more positive influence (BEIC, 1993; Sly *et al.*, 1998). Furthermore, because of certain caste differences, the *Thekedhars* may be more employment orientated in comparison to higher caste Sikhs for whom educational success is seen to be of greater importance. Further example is seen in the increasing tendency for Sikh girls to pursue education for the purposes of marriagability (Gibson and Bhachu, 1988). Analysis of the 1991 Census found South Asian women were marrying at a much later age and were more likely to possess higher educational qualifications compared to pre-migration levels. There is every indication that the general delay in marriage is a result of educational aspirations as well as the desire to marry a partner that has, at least, similar educational qualifications (Berrington, 1996). Furthermore, the findings here have determined that there is every suggestion parents are supportive of girls and in recent periods it is reflected in the performances of South

Asian girls rising over the boys (cf. Siann *et al.*, 1990; Siann and Knox, 1992; BCC, 2000 for Birmingham).

The experiences of South Asian Muslim parents are more complex. Parents of Pakistani origin geographically dominating parts of Birmingham are not usually equipped with the same level of educational qualifications or occupational status as Sikh or Hindu parents. In addition, Muslim (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) parents are conscious of the need to uphold strong Islamic and cultural traditions that are intended for their young, particularly in the face of discrimination, and economic and social disadvantage. Therefore, Islamic education is considered important as well as conventional school education. Inner city schools contain high numbers of Muslim pupils and are also a place in which aspects of religion and ethnic minority cultural norms and values can be exposed to children. A large part has developed because of the push by parents but it has also been affected by the determination of schools and teachers to bridge the gap between community and schooling (Dwyer, 1995; Dwyer and Meyer, 1995; Joly, 1995; Lewis, 1994; Vincent, 1995).

The situation of Bangladeshis is a variant of the Pakistanis. Arriving relatively later on but settling in the same declining inner city locations has resulted in younger Bangladeshis experiencing a similarly meagre education. Bangladeshis tend to be even poorer and even less educated than their Pakistani counterparts, but are also experiencing the rapid development of an Islamic and national identity among the younger generations (Beckerlegge, 1989; Peach, 1990; Eade, 1989; 1990 Gardner and Shukur, 1994).

The notion South Asian parents are especially encouraging of their children is well reported in research (Taylor and Hegerty, 1985); but the extent to which this differs across South Asian groups is less well documented. Given the disadvantaged conditions

some South Asians experience, the desire to achieve upward economic and social mobility through their children is comprehensible.

5.4 Teacher views on parent involvement with children

Teachers from the inner city comprehensive schools were sure South Asian parents were encouraging and supportive but they also felt that some lacked the necessary resources to meet their children's educational needs. The position was endorsed poignantly by a junior teacher [3] from an inner city comprehensive school,

Some [parents] are very supportive. Some have got amazing aspirations for their children and you know that they are not going to achieve them. The child can barely read and write and the parents think that they are going to be a pilot or an astronaut or whatever. I think that a lot of parents have very high aspirations but I think that some of them have got limited recognition of their own child's ability. Parents sometimes think that it's just gonna happen, no sort of clue about what's involved...

Teachers also reported another feature of the attitudes of poorer South Asian parents was the extent to which they were dependent on the school. There was an expectation on the part of parents that the school would take all the necessary steps to ensure positive educational success. The deputy head [11] of Longlake School stated,

There is still a general attitude amongst parents that the school takes responsibility for children and that hasn't really changed as time progresses, there are rather more of the second generation – third generation parents coming along who do take more... Having been here as long as I have its nice to see people that I taught when I first came coming back with their children, and their attitude is obviously slightly different because they have an understanding of what goes on here, they know what the expectations are in terms of parental support so for those people it continues to be a moving target. But they are a relatively small proportion of the population that we service but, by and large its still, "well its your business, you get on and do it".

An Indian teacher [8] from an inner city comprehensive school also re-affirmed the view that some parents lacked the educational resources to assist their children. The basic

foundation could be traced back to the impoverished economic and social conditions found in the sending regions before migration,

Now our 'Hindu group' is diminished to almost nothing, we still have a large number of Sikhs and Muslims whose parents tend to be least educated, they've come from rural backgrounds. Our Muslims are mainly sort of Mirpuris and our Sikhs sort of sons and daughters of ex-Punjabi farmers. Although they value education highly and they do want their children to aspire to educational success, I am not sure that they have the mechanism and the knowledge of how the system works for them to encourage their children and support them enough.

In the selective schools, however, certain patterns re-emerged. For example, an Indian teacher [14] from Psi Grove School added, given the general academic orientation of the school, parents placed an overwhelming emphasis upon pursuing a career in 'the professions', predominantly medicine and thus the GCSE and A level subjects required to pursue such paths. He stated,

I think there is a lot of pressure on them [South Asian boys] from the parents themselves, the parents feel that my son is at a grammar school and because he's got into a grammar school he's got to become a doctor or something high powered like that and they've got such high expectations. Just because of that that they force their kids to try above their ability really, to reach levels which obviously they can't so a lot of kids who don't do well its because of this extra burden. If the parents were relaxed a bit and let the kids go with the flow, still encourage them – encourage them rather than pressurise them – they would actually probably do better.

The head [17] of Rosebud School felt certain South Asian parents pushed their daughters towards particular forms of higher education entry because it improved their marriagability status. The head's views were on the ways in which she believed the South Asian girls in her selective school developed particular academic goals. She said,

I think there is all the while in the families [South Asian], there is this desire to enter professions which are socially and upwardly mobile, I still think there is the marriage factor, you are more marriageable if you are in a profession, you'll get a husband who is similarly placed... that outlook as well... I think that is happening. The worry I sometimes have is that girls are pushed into those subjects against their will but I would say there is almost no evidence of that

happening and we try if that is true, to say to the girls lets talk to the parents, lets look at alternative things. I have only come across one in the whole of this year. I think I would be aware of it either through staff telling me or girls telling me directly...

An understanding of how significant medicine as a profession appeared to be for South Asian pupils was also reflected in another comment made by the head of sixth form at Rosebud School [16],

Oh absolutely, yes they are going for what jobs are carrying the status in the community. Apart from medicine, my impression is that nothing else compares very much, but also to be a lawyer, doctor, dentist, pharmacist perhaps. They don't always look at the arts subjects and they don't always believe there are the jobs at the end of it.

The head of Omega High School [13] reiterated the point parents placed far too great an emphasis upon medicine and it affected the potential outcome of pupils, who would perhaps attain more in other fields.

I understand there might well be a sense of social insecurity and that the medical profession is seen as a very safe option in a whole lot of ways but I find that we have got girls, South Asian girls, who shouldn't be doing science A levels, who are incredibly gifted in other ways and yet the family pressure to take sciences and then do medicine... not even consider a pure science research degree... is very very strong. Now I find that difficult to deal with because the parents clearly feel that the advice the school is giving is not right, they think they know better than the school, lots of parents think they know better than the teachers and that's a phenomenon that one is used to... What I've linked with that is that when these girls perhaps don't look as if they're going to get top grades that they need, I sense much more of a sense of dissatisfaction with the school than I do from white parents so the South Asian parents will come and say well this isn't good enough, what are you going to do about it, and that's quote hard again because the answer to that is well we are doing everything we can, we're working with your daughter as hard as we can but we have kept saying we don't think she's going to get As and we can't manipulate the university system, its as it is, and that's hard to know, I feel as if they feel that we've let them down in some way and I suppose I don't know whether all parents do see it in quite the same way.

It is understandable all South Asian parents retain a real and genuine desire for their children to succeed in education. However, not all parents are aware of the ways in

which it is best acquired. Some of the parents that were argued to be uninformed were thought to display an inflexible attitude towards certain routes and outcomes for their children and perhaps jeopardised the possibility of pursuing alternative occupational routes. The degree to which parents, however, were able to influence their own children at this level depended greatly upon their own education and social class levels as well as how they had managed to understand the workings of the educational system. Parents from lower social class backgrounds remained supportive but lacked the necessary resources and knowledge of the education system. It was stated by teachers that some South Asian parents also expected far too much from the school. Parents from higher social class positions whose children had gained entry to selective schooling continued to place pressure on their children. Realising the higher status of selective schools, these parents felt their children ought to perform exceptionally well. Table 5.3 above shows the views of teachers towards South Asian parents. Table 5.3 above shows the views of teachers towards South Asian parents.

Table 5.3 Teacher expectations: perceptions of South Asian parents

Teachers On Parents	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
Asian Parents Make It More Difficult For Their Daughters Than Their Sons	6 (9)	21 (33)	29 (45)	7 (11)	2 (3)	65 (100)
Asian Parents Expect More From The School Than White Parents	4 (6)	12 (18)	17 (26)	29 (45)	3 (5)	65 (100)
All Asian Parents Are Motivated For Their Children	3 (5)	21 (32)	20 (30)	19 (29)	3 (5)	66 (100)
Asian Parents Are Less Likely To Get Involved With The School	2 (3)	23 (35)	14 (21)	20 (30)	7 (11)	66 (100)
Asian Parents Do Not Speak Enough English With Their Children	2 (3)	16 (24)	24 (36)	21 (32)	3 (5)	66 (100)
Asian Parents Put Too Much Pressure On Their Children	2 (3)	15 (23)	30 (45)	19 (29)	-	66 (100)
Asian Parents Are Quick To Criticise Teachers	2 (3)	1 (2)	10 (15)	42 (64)	11 (17)	66 (100)
Asian Parents Are Suspicious Of White Teachers	1 (2)	1 (2)	14 (21)	36 (55)	14 (21)	66 (100)
Asian Parents Never Attend Parents Evenings	-	3 (5)	4 (6)	27 (41)	32 (48)	66 (100)

The notion that South Asian parents are educationally ambitious for their children was well supported by teachers. Teachers nevertheless agreed South Asian parents co-operated with the schools. Interestingly, teachers did not feel parents were directly critical of them. It proposes although parents can sometimes be disappointed with the schools their children attend but in cases of under-performance or dissatisfaction they do not view teachers with derision.

5.5 Discussion

All the pupils in selective schooling expressed that not only were parents encouraging but also keen to ensure eventual success. It was reinforced by the academic orientation of the schools. Within the home, room space and resources available for selective schools pupils were considerably greater than for other South Asian pupils from comprehensive schools. For the latter, however, differences in comparison with the former were evident. Here, parents possessed low educational qualifications, worked in low occupational positions and resided in inner city housing. Limited space available within the home resulted in pupils sharing bedrooms with younger and older siblings. Parents here were nevertheless highly positive about their children's schooling and remained optimistic about their chances.

For teachers, where problems did emerge in comprehensive schools, parents were thought to lack a sufficient grasp of the English language or were ill-equipped with knowledge of the education system to suitably take their children through it. Conversely, in selective schools, parents were thought to be overly demanding of their children and the schools. Here, the high status positions of selective schools encouraged socially mobile South Asian parents to pursue even greater educational goals.

CHAPTER SIX

EXAMINATION PERFORMANCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRY

6.1 Introduction

Various studies have shown that South Asians have a propensity to remain in further education at far higher rates, on average, compared to white groups (Gutpa, 1977; Craft and Craft, 1983; Drew *et al.*, 1997). The essential reason for this stems from South Asians aspiring to improved educational success, attempting to overcome educational disadvantage or wishing to remain in education because of no other option. This chapter contains the findings in relation to outcomes from examinations taken and processes leading to higher education. The views of pupils, students and teachers are used to illustrate the ways in which the educational achievements between different South Asians diverge. First, the GCSE and A level examination performances of the sampled school pupil and college students are compared to citywide and national averages. This is followed by a section, based on the views of pupils, students and teachers on examinations performance and the path towards higher education entry.

6.2 Examination performance in relative terms

It is important to evaluate the way in which the schools and colleges containing the South Asian pupils and students in this study performed in relation to each other as well as to citywide and national results. Some schools and colleges in the study were able to provide accurate data on ethnicity, gender and examination achievement. There was also additional information available from Birmingham LEA and from data provided publicly by the Department of Education and Employment (BCC, 2000; DfEE, 2000).

The first part of this section evaluates the performance of ethnic minority groups relationally as well as in comparison to citywide results. Subsequently, the grades from

GCSE and A level examinations taken at the sampled schools and colleges are highlighted – including here also, where available, school and college documentation in relation to ethnic minority achievement.

6.2.1 Educational achievements in Birmingham

The relative proportions of ethnic minority groups in Birmingham schools can be seen below in Table 6.1 for the year 1997. As local population numbers have shown, Pakistanis are the largest ethnic minority group in the city and, as such, they are the group greatest in number within the schools (approximately one in six of all pupils). The Bangladeshi figure however is considerably smaller in comparison to the other South Asian groups (approximately one in 33 of all pupils). The Indians are the same in number as African-Caribbean groups (approximately one in 10 of all pupils).

Table 6.1 Birmingham ethnic minority groups in schools [1997]

Ethnic Group	Primary (%)	Secondary (%)	Population 1991 Census (%)
White	61	57	79
Pakistani	16	16	7
African-Caribbean	7	8	6
Indian	6	9	5
Bangladeshi	3	3	1

Source: adapted from Osler and Hill, 1999, p. 39

Based on the following statistics made available from the Birmingham LEA, Table 6.2 shows clearly that average South Asian 5+ GCSE A-C achievement has been increasing over the period 1995 to 1999.

Pakistani boys were the lowest performers of all the South Asian groups in this period. Nevertheless, African-Caribbean boys achieved the least in comparison to all other groups. It was in sharp contrast to the African-Caribbean girls, who achieved nearly twice as well as boys. Indian boys and girls performed best of all groups,

followed by the whites, Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and African-Caribbeans. However, although the Indians easily surpassed citywide averages they had only managed to reach close to national 5+ GCSE A-C averages.¹

Table 6.2 Birmingham 5+ GCSE A-C by ethnicity and gender [1995-1999]

Ethnic Group	Gender	1995 (%)	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)	1999 (%)
African-Caribbean	Boys	13	11	13	13	20
African-Caribbean	Girls	23	24	24	28	30
Bangladeshi	Boys	22	21	22	28	31
Bangladeshi	Girls	25	32	28	36	40
Indian	Boys	37	40	40	40	43
Indian	Girls	42	44	46	50	55
Pakistani	Boys	20	20	19	21	26
Pakistani	Girls	22	24	25	31	32
White	Boys	34	33	32	34	33
White	Girls	38	42	40	44	45
Birmingham	Boys	35	38	41	42	43
Birmingham	Girls	28	29	30	30	32
England*	All	45	45	45	46	48

Source: adapted from BCC (2000) and DfEE (2000)*

It is also apparent from the above table that the greatest improvement in performance has been made by the South Asian females – with Bangladeshi females exhibiting the greatest overall net improvement during the period. The relative ability of Bangladeshi girls to perform well needs to be set in the context of the ambitions of this group as well as the changing attitudes towards and of South Asian Muslim girls in education (questions of population size are also important to consider). In 1999, Indian girls performed best of all in Birmingham.

¹ A recent analysis of Birmingham school exclusion rates found that the accepted pattern of African-Caribbean boys being excluded from school was instead reproduced for Pakistani boys. In inner city Birmingham LEA maintained schools, it was found that of the South Asians, 'Muslims' were most likely to be excluded compared to the 'Sikhs and Hindus'. Using 1994-1995 and 1995-1996 Birmingham LEA data, it was noted that there was, 'an increase in the permanent exclusions of Asian pupils – which may be directed particularly against Muslim rather than Sikh or Hindu pupils' (Mehra, 1999, p. 470).

As such, the educational achievement levels of South Asians in Birmingham provide a picture to show that Indians are the highest performers and Pakistanis the least. Great care, however, is needed in the interpretation of these results as total numbers in each sub-category of ethnic minority group distort the overall delineation. Nevertheless, there are useful characteristics that can be recognised from the data based on variations in South Asian ethnicity, gender and school effect.

6.2.2 Sampled schools

Based on examination result statistics made available publicly by the DfEE, Table 6.3 below shows the 5+ GCSE A-C results for the sampled schools in the period 1994 to 1999, compared to citywide and national averages.

Table 6.3 Sampled schools: 5+ GCSE A-C [1994 – 1999]

School	1994 (%)	1995 (%)	1996 (%)	1997 (%)	1998 (%)	1999 (%)
Omega High	100	100	100	100	100	100
Rosebud	100	100	99	100	100	100
Psi Grove	90	97	96	100	95	98
New Heath	20	27	29	37	39	47
St Aiden's	24	16	18	25	33	28
Longlake	21	20	24	21	21	19
Birmingham	36	35	33	35	36	38
England	46	45	45	45	46	48

Source: adapted from DfEE (2000)

It is unambiguous that four of the six schools in the sample obtained 5+ GCSE A-C grades well in excess of citywide and national averages. The high rates for Omega High, Rosebud and Psi Grove schools were clearly a reflection of their selective statuses. Omega High School for Girls also enjoying the privileged status of independence and the power to charge fees, thereby selecting not only on the basis of an ‘intelligence test’ but also on the basis of income. Of all the comprehensive schools in the study, New

Heath School was the only to make the most sustained progress in results over the period 1994 to 1999. The other schools performed relatively constantly over this time period. Between 1994 and 1999, Birmingham 5+ GCSE A-C grades increased from 36 to 38 per cent and national 5+ GCSE A-C grades rose from 46 to 48 per cent.

Table 6.4 shows the results of AS/A level examinations (per individual entry), taken in the sampled schools in the years 1994 to 1999. The relative strengths of the selective schools can also be discerned here. Of the comprehensive schools, only New Heath School results were comparable to the citywide average.

Table 6.4 Sampled schools: average AS/A level score per entry [1994 – 1999]

School	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Omega High	9	9	9	9	9	9
Rosebud	6	6	7	8	8	8
Psi Grove	6	7	6	6	6	7
New Heath	-	8	4	5	5	4
Longlake	3	3	5	4	4	4
England	5	5	5	5	5	6

Source: adapted from DfEE (2000). St Aiden's School does not feature in the above table.

The strong academic potential of the selective schools were again manifest. These schools were conspicuously ahead of not only the other schools in the study but also in relation to the country. It appears therefore that the period of A levels were experienced markedly differently in selective schools in comparison to the comprehensive schools in the study. The significance of A level results for university entry is heightened even further when it is realised the extent to which selective schools can make such a difference to the subjects passed and the grades attained. Table 6.5 below shows the AS/A level results of all the pupils in the sampled schools (average score per candidate).

Table 6.5 Sampled schools: average AS/A level score per candidate [1994 – 1999]

School	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Omega High	35	37	36	36	36	38
Rosebud	25	25	29	32	31	31
Psi Grove	25	27	24	26	25	30
Longlake	10	10	15	11	11	11
New Heath	-	-	11	12	13	10
Birmingham	-	-	15	16	16	16
England	15	16	17	17	18	18

Source: adapted from DfEE (2000)

In addition to information that is open to the public, some of the schools in the study were able to supply further data on the nature of pupil ethnicity and attainment. Only Rosebud and New Heath schools however were ultimately able to make available examinations data on pupils suitable for this study.

The head of Rosebud School provided examination statistics by ethnicity for the years 1996 to 1998. The data epitomised strongly that South Asians tended to achieve as high or higher than their white counterparts, given that almost all the pupils in the school performed well. The following quote originates from a report written by the head highlighting changing examination attainments by ethnicity. The head of Rosebud School described the wide ethnic diversity among the pupils and how parents were encouraged by this factor. The report, written in 1998 stated,

South Asian girls have a clear scientific bias in their option choices with large numbers choosing biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. Large numbers also choose English... the admissions register shows that the number of girls admitted with South Asian surnames has risen from three in 1969 to 45 in 1998 (thirty five percent), a rise of about 10 per cent each decade.

It was also established Sikhs from the local area were greatest in number. For the most part, they were located in neighbouring middle-class areas. The few that originated from the east of Birmingham were for the most part Pakistani. In 1998, seventy per cent of the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in the school were from the east of Birmingham, which is

largely made up of a number of deprived inner city areas. The following quotation, furthermore, is also taken from the document produced by the head and provides further useful information,

In Birmingham in 1997 nearly half the children in secondary education were from ethnic minority groups. The main minority group was Pakistani and children from South Asia make up about a third of the secondary school population. Just over a third of [Rosebud's] pupils are from ethnic minority groups with those of Indian origin dominating. This reflects the relative affluence of the groups but also the school's location in the west of the city. Panjabi is the main home language of the school's pupils other than English and the Sikh religion predominates. Hindus and Muslims are also numerous and it is the strength of the school that a balance exists. *The school is actually one of the most ethnically diverse in the city.*

Rosebud head school report, 1998, *original emphasis*

In New Heath School, 113 boys and 84 girls were entered for GCSE examinations in 1996. Of the 197 in total, 115 were Pakistani, 47 Bangladeshi, 18 others and 17 whites. It was found Bangladeshi girls were the highest examination performers. Pakistani boys were the lowest performers from the ethnic minority groups. In 1998, data on school leaver destinations were compiled as part of a school leavers report. It was written in conjunction with the Careers and Education Business Partnership (CEBP) of Birmingham. It appeared that at a great many of the pupils (invariably all South Asian Muslims) tended to remain in the school for further study (82 per cent). The figure was 15 per cent higher than for the rest of Birmingham. The account claimed,

...the main reasons pupils stated for staying on in the school 6th form [were] that they like the school and want to stay in a familiar environment with teachers they know and trust... Of the 49 pupils, 32 chose to study A levels, 13 chose vocational courses and one chose to do GCSE re-sits, the remaining three pupils course details weren't known.

It was also found, nevertheless, that the majority of pupils staying on were indeed female. The experiences of South Asian Muslim girls from New Heath School suggested the extent to which economic, social and cultural forces within the home

dissuaded selection of other institutions for further education. The CEBP report added, ‘often, their parents are not keen for them to leave school as they are concerned about the college environment’.

6.2.3 Sampled colleges

Moving on to the data on college examination performance, Table 6.6 shows the average A level grade achieved by each student from the sampled colleges in comparison to citywide and national averages.

Table 6.6 Sampled colleges: average AS/A level per entry [1994 – 1999]

College	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
St Margaret's	5	5	5	4	5	5
Cherrywood	4	4	4	5	4	3
James Watt	4	3	2	3	3	3
England	5	5	5	5	5	6

Source: adapted from DfEE (2000)

The above table shows that between the years 1994 to 1999, on average, these further education colleges had generally performed below national levels – at least at the level of individual student entry. Only St Margaret’s College had been able to keep up to national levels of performance. Table 6.7 below shows the average AS/A level score per candidate from the sampled colleges in comparison to citywide and national levels.

Table 6.7 Sampled colleges: average AS/A level per candidate [1994 – 1999]

College	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
St Margaret's	15	15	14	15	14	15
James Watt	10	9	6	9	8	7
Cherrywood	6	6	7	-	-	6
Birmingham	-	-	15	16	16	16
England	-	-	17	17	18	18

Source: adapted from DfEE (2000)

St Margaret's College was the only one of the three further education colleges in the study that managed to produce results comparable to citywide and national averages.

Only one of the colleges in the study was able to provide examination results data in addition to those made publicly available. A senior teacher from St Margaret's College provided access to detailed internal examination reports. The college collects statistical data on the examination results of students by ethnicity year-on-year. Descriptive summaries of a range of these statistics are elaborated upon below.

In 1996, the A level pass rate for girls was 88 per cent and for boys 87 per cent. The A level pass rate for white students was 88 per cent compared to 87 per cent for ethnic minority students. There were 1,290 A level entries and on average each South Asian student took 2.9 subjects. Table 6.8 below shows the ethnic minority breakdown of students by grade obtained at A level in 1996.

Table 6.8 St Margaret's A level results by ethnicity [1996]

Ethnic Group	A	B	C	D	E	N	U	% A-C	Number of passes
White	104	112	168	185	174	70	36	45	743
Pakistani	10	25	37	33	26	9	11	48	131
Indian	9	25	32	29	24	12	5	49	119
Black	2	10	18	16	15	6	6	41	61
Chinese	3	7	3	3	2	0	1	68	18
Bangladeshi	0	13	1	0	1	1	0	88	15
Other*	28	82	100	92	79	30	30	47	381
All	132	194	268	277	253	100	66	46	1124

*Ethnicity not determined.

The above table shows that Pakistanis and Indians accounted for the greatest in ethnic minority numbers. Their performances were relatively similar. Given the small Bangladeshi sample size, their performance appeared well above average.

Table 6.9 below shows the ethnic breakdown of performance by ethnicity in 1997. Note also an increase in the college intake. It came about after a change in the

funding status of the college affecting an increase of all groups attending.

Table 6.9 St Margaret's A level results by ethnicity [1997]

Ethnic Group	A	B	C	D	E	N	U	% A-C	Number of passes
White	143	205	228	232	170	80	49	59	978
Chinese	0	9	2	7	2	0	0	55	20
Bangladeshi	3	4	17	17	9	3	0	45	50
Pakistani	10	25	29	38	25	13	15	41	127
Other*	33	93	126	160	109	82	42	40	521
Indian	7	26	23	37	25	18	15	38	118
Black	3	13	16	23	17	11	5	36	72
All	176	298	354	392	279	142	91	48	1499

*Ethnicity not determined.

Here, the above table shows that in 1997, it was the whites followed by Chinese, which scored highest grades between A-C at A level.

Taken as a whole, in 1998, the St Margaret's College was able to generate an 85 per cent A level pass rate of which 48 per cent were between the grades of A and C. One out of three A level subjects had a pass rate of over 95 per cent. The average number of Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) points per candidate was 14. The highest 100 students averaged 28 UCAS points and the uppermost 200 students averaged 23 UCAS points.

6.3 School pupil and college student perspectives and aspirations

This section explores the views of pupils and students on their decisions when making further and higher education choices. It also explores the views of respondents in relation to subject choices and intended careers.

The choice of further education institution is informed by a myriad of factors. Individuals decide on the basis of spatial realities, 'choice is both enabled and constrained by the complex interplay of material practices (e.g. housing patterns, transport, social networks) and the perceptions and imaginings of space (e.g. mental

maps, the “friction of distance”, familiarity and fear)’ (Ball *et al.*, 1998, p. 171).

Pupils from the selective schools scored highly in their GCSE examinations leading more often than not to a desire for entry into the elite universities and/or their colleges. Girls as well as boys expressed marked aspirations to study science, with medicine, dentistry and engineering (as well as pure sciences) being popular choices (cf. Sammons, 1995; Woodrow, 1996). In addition, law was another popular choice. Pupils from the selective schools were also inclined to be articulate and confident about their potential educational futures.

All the respondents from the selective schools chose to remain in their respective sixth forms. The high educational success rates of these schools were fundamental in retaining pupils. Various rudimentary explanations for why pupils chose to stay on at the school were offered. Two Indian (one Sikh and one Hindu) Psi Grove schoolboys typified responses from the selective schools,

[A] I have chosen to stay. It is a good school and I can relate to the teachers well.

[B] It would have been a lot easier to stay here and carry on.

A year thirteen Hindu girl at Rosebud School took 11 GCSE subjects. She obtained four A*s and seven grade As. The respondent was reflective of the vast majority of all South Asian girls from the selective schools. She said,

It was kind of like what I wanted. It was what I expected as well. I didn't want any Bs. It sounds really daft. It seems really odd when I went to get my results - well did I want them - do I deserve them or what?

The highest result in the year was 8 A*s and 2 As... There were 15 of us that got all As. And then there were people that got 5 A*s and above. They got a prize and they got a little medallion thing... and there were 7 of those... and there were many people that got one B but many more A*s than me... Out of the 15, 2 or 3 were Asians.

The respondent was in the first year of her A levels in Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics. She also wanted to read medicine at university,

I want to go to Birmingham [University]. It's near and I've been there and I've looked at the course and everything... and I just think that I like it there really... I don't want to particularly move away from home very much either... Also my mom doesn't want me to out of Birmingham, she wants me to stay here.

In making up her mind, she had also considered other universities,

Birmingham, Manchester want ABB at A level and London want ABB. Oxbridge want 3 As... I know its kind of a stereotype that they are all snobs there... but I know they're not. I don't think I am going to get in for one... because I haven't got the ability really. I learn things but sometimes I cant apply them properly or I am usually a few percentage points of a really high score... I've had that all my life and its really annoying... but I get used to it.

Correspondingly, a Sikh year eleven girl from Omega High School for Girls also revealed her high-status ambitions. She talked about the way in which her educational path would be determined by how tactically she felt she had to select her A level subjects,

I want to be a Pharmacist or something like that. [As to A level subjects]... It would be Chemistry, Biology and something else. Maths would be an advantage... but I can't do that because you need to get an A [at GCSE] to do the A level. And because I am doing a lower paper, I can't do that. I don't think I'll be able to get it anyway. I think that Physics would be another advantage. I really don't feel that I understand a word but in tests I get good marks so...

An East African Muslim year twelve Rosebud schoolgirl talked about her intentions for study after GCSE examinations. Here, it is clear that this individual by having achieved a long string A and A* grades at GCSE, realising that to read medicine at university three A grades at A level would her least requirement, felt nevertheless that the field of study was her most seemly option. The respondent was also cognisant of the potential of other medicine- or science-related subjects. She stated,

I don't mind staying in Birmingham... Birmingham will ask for 3 As. If you re-sit everybody wants As then. You can get into other universities but I'll have to get As and Bs to even think about doing... optometry... or pharmacy then'.

Her aspirations to read medicine originated out of a perception of the improbabilities of success in certain other employment sectors. She added,

I wanted to go into journalism but its too competitive and there's not a guaranteed job whereas sciences are fine. You are more likely to get a job, I think, it's a wider a field you can do a lot more with it.

A feature that has been revisited on a number of occasions in this study, is the demand to study medicine at university, primarily among South Asian girls at Omega High and Rosebud schools. It is discussed why this aspiration was so prevalent by a Sikh year thirteen girl from Rosebud School,

Why do you think that so many Asians want to read medicine at university?

It's cause of the parents, they want the best for their children. I wanted to apply for medicine since the age of 10. I think that Asian parents are more determined to get their children somewhere then white people are and some black people. I mean that some black people are but I mean. White people just tend to let their children do whatever they want. Whereas I think the Asian parents encourage or pressure their children more than others. I mean there are five or six new girls that come [into the sixth form], four of them are doing the sciences, and all four of those want to do either medicine or dentistry.

A number of the girls from the selective schools said that attending Aston and Birmingham universities were high-ranking choices for them. The wish to live at home during higher education was a feature of many South Asian girls and some boys. Nevertheless, both boys and girls chose high-ranking universities and subject courses as the norm. South Asians Muslim girls in particular chose universities nearer home.

Pupils from the comprehensive schools exhibited certain similarities towards staying in their schools for further study. Many of the pupils remained in the sixth forms to study A levels. Indeed, there were examples of Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls who

were less convinced of the advantages of travelling away for further or even higher education. A Pakistani girl from New Heath School said,

You can get good grades wherever you go, it just depends on whether you wanna work or not. You can go to a really good sixth form and really fail everything or you can go to like a really bad one and pass them.

A Pakistani year twelve New Heath schoolgirl [wearing headscarf] expressed a desire to stay on at the school sixth form simply because of practical reasons,

I rebelled so much against my parents... that I wanted to go to college... that I wanted to... you know... become independent and learn stuff. So here, I know the teachers... smaller classes... closer to home... you don't have to pay for bus passes. There are more ticks than crosses.

The respondent felt confident that with the assistance of her father, who was a laboratory technician, her educational life course was already predestined. In relation to the respondent's views on university entry,

I think I would give medicine a miss... because I am not sure that I could achieve the grades. So my next bet is on endocrinology... something that is medical related... My dad said that you can do what you want as long as you get the grades.

For some of the South Asian Muslim girls in particular, the question of staying at home and attending a local university was a delicate one. Those wishing to stay close to home were aware of some of the benefits; namely, the strong reputations of both Aston and Birmingham, the saving on accommodation costs and reliable sources of support. In the end, however, the final choices for South Asian girls were considered to have been managed by parents (cf. Singh, 1990).

Some of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils from the comprehensive schools were less sure about the nature of their potential for further or higher education entry,

the required grades needed, or the precise content of subject courses. Only a general inclination to follow sciences was apparent. The reason for such disenchantment was in part related to schools and in part related to parents. The schools here contained high proportions of ethnic minority pupils, and are located in inner city areas with diminished overall resources at their disposal. Parents lacked the knowledge of the education system to advise and inform their children satisfactorily.

College students were asked ‘how supportive are your parents with your education?’ Responses are shown below in Table 6.10. More than half of all college students felt parents were supportive. The Bangladeshis however were least likely to agree. Pakistanis and Bangladeshis were also more likely to acknowledge parents were not able to help directly.

Table 6.10 College students: on parent support

Parent Support	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
There Is No Doubt About It	5 (31)	24 (65)	33 (65)	62 (60)
Yes, But They Are In No Position To Help	6 (38)	9 (24)	11 (22)	26 (25)
They Don't Care	-	1 (3)	2 (4)	13 (13)
They Have Little Idea Of How The Education System Works	5 (31)	3 (8)	5 (10)	3 (3)
Total	16 (100)	37 (100)	51 (11)	104 (100)

College students were asked about parent evenings to determine how parents participated in their children’s schooling. Table 6.11 shows the results below.

Table 6.11 College students: on parent attendance at parent evenings

Parent Evening Attendance	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Yes, All The Time	4 (25)	26 (70)	23 (45)	53 (51)
Only Sometimes, Replaced By Others If Not	2 (13)	7 (19)	16 (31)	25 (24)
Only If They 'Had To'	2 (13)	3 (8)	8 (16)	13 (13)
Not Once	7 (44)	1 (3)	4 (8)	12 (12)
There Were No Parent Evenings	1 (6)	-	-	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	37 (100)	51 (100)	104 (100)

A difference between Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani parents is noticed, although half

of all respondents stated that parents were high attendees. Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were likely to report parents were low attendees. Forty-four per cent of the Bangladeshis stated neither of their parents had ever attended.

The support of parents in their children's education is crucial to successful education. Some college students, however, were critical of their parents' support in their education. Three Indian girls from St Margaret's College wrote the following separate entries on the self-completed surveys,

[A] Doing 'A' Levels is equally hard as running around the world in 80 days especially if you have no help or guidance – and this means working twice as hard. On top of all this there comes colossal, I mean colossal, pressure from your parents. My parents unfortunately have no English education and what really gets me is that they think its so easy to pass with A*s and get degrees. I think that we (I) are very unfortunate to be living in England because we are all the time facing an immense culture clash.

[B] I have been estimated BBB at 'A' level and because I had many As and A*s at GCSE, my father feels this is not good enough. My parents always put me down – saying your work is deteriorating, not realising that 'A' Levels are so hard. I think if they had supported me more instead of telling me I'm stupid, I may have done better. Being an Indian 'girl' in particular has also meant that my parents were against sending me to university. They felt being a girl, I'd not be able to survive on my own. My education is really important to me and I had a really hard time explaining to my parents that no bad would come of me going to university. I think parents make it really difficult for Asian girls to study – I know they did for me anyway.

[C] Parents strongly pressure children to study and achieve what they themselves never could for various reasons. This can act as both motivation, yet a hindrance, as they are pressuring the children without realising it.

College students were asked about their educational and occupational intentions on leaving. Table 6.12 shows this below. The vast majority of all South Asian college students wished to pursue an academic route into university, although the Bangladeshi groups were least likely to be committed to this path. Indians were more likely to want to attend university than any of the other South Asian groups.

Table 6.12 College students: 18+ exit route

18+ Exit Route	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Go To University	2 (14)	25 (69)	32 (62)	59 (58)
Look For A Job	6 (43)	2 (6)	6 (12)	14 (14)
See What Grades I Get And Then Work It Out	3 (21)	2 (6)	5 (10)	10 (10)
Get Onto Another Course At College	2 (14)	5 (14)	2 (4)	9 (9)
Complete Course	1 (7)	1 (3)	2 (4)	4 (4)
Sit At Home	-	-	2 (4)	2 (2)
Self-Employment	-	-	2 (4)	2 (2)
Working Whilst Studying*	-	1 (3)	-	1 (1)
Get Married*	-	-	1 (2)	1 (1)
Total	14 (100)	36 (100)	52 (100)	102 (100)

*Categories are self-ascribed.

In summary, the above findings broadly confirm many of the already recognised trends in research on ethnic minorities entering higher education. Research conducted in the 1980s by Vellins (1982) found that South Asians were more likely to study medicine, science and engineering. South Asians were found to re-sit examinations to improve upon grades and, as such, South Asian students were often older when starting university (Tanna, 1990; Connolly, 1994). In the 1980s, the trend for Muslim girls has been not to achieve as much as boys. In the last decade, however, this relationship has been completely inverted, with all girls achieving better than all boys.

Research based on 1992 UCCA and PCAS admissions data found that the inequalities of pre-university entry remained when moving into higher education (Taylor, 1993; Modood, 1993). It was found that in relation to the more demanded subject choices, such as medicine and law, the various elite university and college systems were relatively neutral in the treatment of ethnic minority groups. The converse was true for institutions offering the lowest entry points. Pakistani boys and girls were significantly underrepresented in traditional universities and over represented in the 'former polytechnics' (Connolly, 1994; Modood and Shiner, 1994). Therefore, there was, on the one hand, a trend among South Asian students entering university for

subjects requiring the highest grades at prestigious institutions, while on the other, there was less of a trend for some to attend 'former polytechnics' or pursue certain subjects leading to comparatively less well paid work, such as teaching (Goulbourne and Lewis-Meeks, 1993). The findings from the current research support such tendencies. Certainly, the South Asian pupils and students that were aware of the potential were selecting the most sought after subjects in the most desirable of universities and were inclined to overlook those subjects based on offers of relatively lower A level grades.

In terms of the actual subject choices made, pure science subjects were definitive choices for South Asian boys and girls in all the schools and colleges. In a recent study of ethnic minority and white students ($n = 2612$) sampled from schools and further education colleges, it was found that South Asians preferred to be with other students that held similar values and norms to their own. In contrast, white students felt that personal growth and autonomy were more important. Invariably law, accountancy and medicine attracted South Asian students. Yet again, it was said that parents were supportive of the successful pupils in education. Studying subjects with high prestige was thought to bring benefit to both parents and children.

For ethnic minority groups in particular, it was found parents played an important part in their children's attitude towards education. Much of the support given by parents could be attributed to their own social and educational experiences and a longing to escape from their existing social milieu, through the upward economic and social mobility of their children (Lightbody *et al.*, 1997). The pupils and students in this study held similar attitudes towards and behaviour in education, as found in the Lightbody *et al.* (1997) study, although the South Asian groups varied in how well they were able to make real the extent of their educational aspirations. It was related to parents and their social and educational class as well as how schools were effective.

Despite the overwhelming preference for subjects such as medicine, research evidence has also shown that certain medical schools have repeatedly discriminated against ethnic minority applicants. It is important to take this into account given that so many of the South Asians, and particularly those from selective schools, expressed a strong pull towards the discipline. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE, 1988) found that St. George's Hospital Medical School in London was biased against ethnic minority applicants and especially females. It was alleged that a faulty computer programme had unwittingly created the problem. Further analysis of wider medical school entry data has also found that, given A level scores, ethnic minority applicants were more likely to be discriminated against in comparison to their white counterparts. The difference, furthermore, has been greatest between white and African-Caribbean applicants (Esmail *et al.*, 1996).

It is because of the determination of a certain social class of South Asian parents and their children, which continues to be resilient in the face of adversity, which permits the perseverance. Medicine as a subject carries real economic, social and cultural importance for many South Asians originating from all sectors of economy and society, but it is only a handful that are ever able to make it, and it appears, a great many may have well been hindered because of factors related to racism.

6.4 Teacher viewpoints

It is clear both pupils and students perform in education in relation to how effective schools are and how well South Asian parents are able to assist their children successfully – through combinations and permutations of social class and cultural capital. It is manifestly borne out in relation to GCSE and A level grades achieved and how South Asian pupils and student select degree subjects and institutions.

In focusing on the move into higher education, the head [17] of Rosebud School felt South Asian girls were confident of the educational paths they were taking,

Very strong desire to go into higher education, it will be rare that an Asian girl a) doesn't stay in sixth form and b) doesn't go into higher education and they of all the groups are the ones that if by any chance something goes wrong with A level and they don't get in I can guarantee they'll try again another year and will get there. They will often go to sixth form college to do special re-take courses, we don't take anybody back.

Similarly, the deputy head [15] of Psi Grove School felt new South Asian entrants in the sixth form would display distinct academic and career preferences,

Generally speaking if an Asian boy comes into us from a sixth form we're really surprised if he wants to do arts subjects, if he's gone up through the school... In other words they do the subjects they feel like doing whereas if they're coming from outside the school they tend to want to do the science subjects. The stereotype is that they want to be doctors and do you wanna be doctor, no, no, no... The priority would be to those who've gone up the school anyway and we're putting new buildings up for space... To say we look at the colour of their faces when they come, that is not true, we do not.

The viewpoints here suggest pupils in the selective system were perhaps over-confident of their educational directions and of the opportunities presented to them. The head [13] of Omega High School stated the South Asian girls in school were perfectly capable in all A level subjects. However, an issue singled out again was the over-aspiration to read medicine at university and how it potentially damaged the occupational life chances of the individuals in question,

I think the fact is that a lot of the girls of all backgrounds could probably do whatever subjects they wanted to at A level and do perfectly well in them but there are cases where there is no doubt with some of the South Asian parents that the girls probably would have got a string of A's... and they have struggled through the sixth form and not particularly enjoyed their science A levels, I mean they are doing well by any standards but I don't know. Yeah. And I mean this is a separate issue but I have reservations about whether medicine is such a good career for women, I actually think that people are wrong in not seeing that. Actually, it's a particularly bad career for women!

A senior teacher [16] from Rosebud School commented on a particular situation in relation to a father of an East African Muslim girl and her educational direction. The father was considered to have been over zealous in his educational aspirations for his daughter,

What happens to the Asians that apply for medicine and do not get offers or do not make it? Do they do similar courses, like dentistry?

We certainly do have one Asian girl at present in the upper sixth year who has applied for medicine against our advice, who is not going to get the grades and got a rejection. I had a long talk with her father who will not accept the situation and said she's going to get in regardless of the fact that there's another girl with a stronger academic ability in the upper sixth year who has applied for medicine and was told by her father to apply for medicine who doesn't want to. Again wondering how to proceed, now her father says now she'll go and do retakes until she gets the grades until she gets to medical school. I think we tend to deflect them a little if we can see that in the lower sixth they are not going to make it. We just say look go for dentistry, optometry, something along those lines, which they have done, one or two have.

The assertion that South Asian parents were overly assertive of their children to read such highly sought after subjects such as medicine was also noticed by the deputy head [15] of Psi Grove School,

There is still a high percentage that still want to be doctors and they get quite disappointed when they don't meet the UCAS grades criteria and we actually find that they try a second time. Their parents are still pushing them, when they leave the school, if they haven't got the A level grades here they tend to go to these tutorial colleges just so they can go into that particular field.

Apart from the subject areas South Asian pupils and students were thought to be enthusiastic about, discussions with teachers also related to where South Asians preferred to study after A levels. The head [17] of Rosebud School emphasised how South Asian girls tended to stay near to their homes for higher education. The head believed that remaining at home provided both rewards and penalties,

With all groups, yes there will be a desire to have Birmingham, possibly Aston depending on the subject and have a higher priority in their choices. For all groups that is becoming an important thing and the good thing in Birmingham is that there are three universities in Birmingham and there is Wolverhampton. They can also go out to Warwick, Coventry, Worcester so there's quite a group of good local universities so living at home doesn't necessarily mean you haven't got a good choice of university. You're networking into some of the best universities in the country which in itself poses a problem because the grades that certainly Aston and Birmingham are offering are terrifically high, and Warwick, and they're so high so that in itself creates a problem with staying local.

The notion that South Asians were increasingly selecting universities closer to their homes was also found from discussions with teachers from the comprehensive schools. The deputy head [12] of New Heath School noticed the preference of his pupils for local universities,

I would say that 99.9 per cent of girls go to local universities, Birmingham, Coventry, Leicester, Wolverhampton and indeed many of the boys too strangely enough, one or two are escaping further afield, I'll remove that word 'escape', one or two are looking further afield...

Inner city comprehensive schools do not always focus on the A level 'gold standard'. Pupils can often take alternative routes and in due course gain entry into higher education. The deputy head [12] of New Heath School added further,

Yes, yeah, Derby, Leicester, UCE, Coventry, the new universities around the area and following on their studies into subjects like because of their choices at GNVQs or A level, carrying on doing things like business studies, law.

Echoing explanations given by some of the heads and senior teachers, a white lecturer [23] talked of the destinations of South Asian students from St Margaret's College,

If you look outside where we came along you'll see the destination of university students for the last two years is on the map of the English Isles, Asian students are overwhelmingly in the West Midlands and in and around London and a lot of students do want to go to Birmingham or failing that UCE or Wolverhampton or Warwick or Coventry or perhaps Stoke, I haven't found that students are particularly concerned whether it's a new university, in fact they do tend to see the old universities as better so Warwick and Birmingham are the

best but Warwick of course is more difficult than Coventry because it's the other side of Coventry, its more difficult to live at home and go there. But in the last couple of years there's been a change here because all the stuff about fees. Now we're finding that white students are copying Asian students and now far more white students want to go locally where you can live at home which you can pretend doesn't cost money because its not yours and you can keep your part time job. So there's been a drop overall in the students this year in the number of students applying to university and there have been far more people applying to local universities, overall for the college as a whole.

A science lecturer from St Margaret’s College [20] understood it was important that ethnic minority groups raised their social status. One of the ways in which this could be done effectively was through education. The following comment is noteworthy,

I think that where you’ve been an immigrant community you will have suffered racism, institutional or whatever as we know from the Stephen Lawrence. You will have suffered racism that racism may well have extended to job opportunities. Therefore I think it becomes very very important as an immigrant community that you do “worthwhile” degrees and that means doing a professional degree, it means that you quite rightly but maybe over value degrees in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy. We know the liturgy, ophthalmics has been discovered by wider communities and so there is very clear demand in Birmingham from the ethnic minority communities for science A levels.

Table 6.13 below shows the attitudinal responses of teachers to a series of statements in relation to educational and occupational subject choices made by South Asian pupils.

Table 6.13 Teacher expectations: educational and occupational choice

Teachers On South Asian Choice	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
I Would Be Deterred From Encouraging A Pupil/Student To Select A Subject If They Were Thought Inept	9 (25)	31 (50)	12 (19)	9 (15)	1 (2)	62 (100)
Asian Parents And Students Strongly Favour Science Subjects	7 (15)	36 (55)	13 (20)	9 (14)	-	65 (100)
Medicine Is Far Too Much A Popular Choice For Asians In Higher Education	4 (6)	23 (35)	22 (34)	15 (23)	1 (2)	65 (100)
Very Few Asian Children Will Study Humanities Subjects After GCSE	1 (2)	20 (31)	20 (31)	21 (33)	2 (3)	64 (100)
Parents Determine All The Important Subject Selections	1 (2)	12 (18)	38 (59)	14 (22)	-	65 (100)

The above table shows that teachers believed that there were tendencies for certain subjects to be chosen, but they, nevertheless, had an important influence on the ultimate paths taken, irrespective of the explicit wishes of parents or pupils.

6.5 Discussion

It appears that parental social class (and cultural capital) and the effects of schools influenced the subjects that pupils and students selected as part of GCSE, A level and eventually higher education periods. Pupils from selective schools decided upon what they regarded as the more prestigious subjects, and boys and girls equally. Pupils from comprehensive schools selected less academically demanding subjects as well as courses with vocational qualifications to them. It emerged significant from teachers that some parents of lower social class origin were thought unrealistically demanding of their children, given the type of school pupils attended. Parents lacking the knowledge and experience to evaluate the educational context in which their children were operating inadvertently imposed impractical demands on both pupils and schools.

There were clear differences found between South Asian groups in relation to social class and educational institution. It is recognised that Indians occupy more affluent social class positions, and with Bangladeshis and Pakistanis experiencing economic and social marginality, residing mainly in inner city areas (Mason, 1995; Modood *et al.*, 1997). The pattern is repeated in the relationship to educational institution such that most ethnic minority children in selective schools are Indians and those in comprehensive schools Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. The degree of difference in educational settings can be attributed to the way in which Indian parents are equipped with the social and cultural capital to advance their children successfully through the fundamental stages of education.

Although Bangladeshis and Pakistanis share similar socio-economic deprivation indicators, Bangladeshi school performance is better than the established Pakistani community. The reason for this is thought to be a function of smaller Bangladeshi numbers in comparison to other ethnic minority groups (see Table 6.1). It may also be related to the changing cultures experienced by the young: Bangladeshi girls are challenging existing patriarchal norms and values and asserting themselves through educational advancement, whereas the boys are affecting by inner city youth cultures which are ultimately deleterious (cf. Debnath, 1998; Haque, 1999; 2000). In all schools in Birmingham, the performance of Bangladesh girls has been rising faster than for Pakistani girls, and for at least since 1996 (to date). In addition, South Asian Muslim groups are beginning to identify more with their religion and culture, particularly as a reaction to the disadvantage they face in inner cities and in the labour market. It has the effect of alienating Bangladeshis and Pakistanis from mainstream society.

In relation to the higher education routes of pupils and students, there are further significant distinctions. Respondents from selective schools tended to remain within their school sixth forms. These schools, given their ethos and standing, typically prepared their pupils for the 'professions', and heightened pupil desire for the elite universities, an ambition which was eagerly supported by their parents. In selective schools, science subjects were popular among South Asians irrespective of their gender. Many of the selective school South Asian girls expressed a wish to attend the better local universities. There was also a significantly high preference for medicine. Subjects such as dentistry, law, pharmacy and optometry were also popular choices.

Pupils from comprehensive schools tended also to pursue the A level route into university but often utilising other vocational qualifications to gain entry. Girls were far more likely to remain in the school sixth forms, whereas the boys expressed the wish to

move away for further education. There was also a strong desire to attend local universities, which were the 'former polytechnics'. The survey of college students, moreover, found that Indians were the most likely to aspire to university entry with Bangladeshis the least. The latter was also far more likely to seek employment after leaving further education compared to any of the other South Asian groups.

The teachers, particularly in selective schools, felt that some of the parents of South Asians pupils were often over-aspirant for their children to pursue the most prestigious and yet most difficult higher educational paths. Teachers, nevertheless, felt that they understood the basis for this action to rest in the desire of South Asian communities for economic and social betterment, with parents using their children as tools in this process. The choice of higher education was also found to have become geographically restricted in the light of recent changes to student funding.

The following chapter explores the dichotomy of whether it is ultimately the schools or the domestic environment of South Asians that leads to educational success, evaluating attitudes towards teachers and schools in relation to those towards the home, and by pupils, students and parents.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A QUESTION OF RESPONSIBILITY: TEACHERS OR THE HOME?

7.1 Introduction

This chapter questions whether it is the parents *or* the teachers that are most effectual in the educational achievement of South Asians and in which particular circumstances. Given the economic and social variations of South Asians and the educational institutions they attend, this chapter shows the way in which differences are polarised between groups. The essential questions here seek to determine whether the causes of achievement or underachievement reside in the home or in the schools and colleges that South Asians attend. The views in this chapter exclude those of teachers; the following chapter utilises the responses of teachers exclusively, principally as rejoinders to issues raised in Chapters Six and Seven in particular.

Pupils, students and parents were asked about specific features within the home and within the schools that lead to both educational achievement and underachievement. Questions revolved around the factors of teacher ethnicity and the role of the school in supporting South Asian pupils and students as well as how various South Asian religions and cultures affected the lives of South Asian pupils and students and their education in schools. The objectives were to determine the range of variables that influenced differing South Asian groups and how they rationalised their educational experiences in relation to other South Asians.

7.2 Perspectives on teachers and schools

Teachers in England have received much public criticism in recent times (OFSTED, 1997; DfEE, 1998). The popular image of teachers has significantly deteriorated with degrees in education for potential teachers continually under-subscribed.

Antiracist educationists consider the overwhelming influence of the teacher and the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship critical to academic achievement. Multicultural educationists argue that a dependable environment within the home coupled with resources and knowledge are the necessary factors leading to achievement. Invariably a combined effort is required and attempts at developing home-school partnerships provide illustrations of this approach (Tomlinson, 1984; Vincent, 1995).

The following section is an analysis of pupil, student and parent views on teachers and schools, which is later followed by a selection of views from pupils, students and parents towards the home environment.

I. School pupils

The questioning of pupils related to whether they would consider either themselves or teachers responsible if they felt they had underachieved. Furthermore, pupils were asked to consider whether their attitude would be different if it involved South Asian teachers (Ghuman, 1995). This part of the chapter raises particularly sensitive issues in relation to the question of teacher racism (Foster, 1992; 1993; Troyna, 1993; 1993a; Cole, 1998; 1998a; Short and Carrington, 1996; 1998), and consequently pupils were either hesitant to speak on the matter or quite open. Questions were put to pupils to discover attitudes towards white and South Asian teachers. An essential aim was to discover whether attitudes towards teachers would alter given some change in 'skin colour' or 'type'. The responses from selective school pupils were revealing. A Sikh year twelve girl from Rosebud School commented, 'I don't think it makes any difference personally'. The respondent elaborated as to why by stating,

Some Asian teachers are prejudiced against Asians. I've noticed that. My mom is a teacher and she says that you do get Asian teachers who are more with whites than they are with Asians, they just fob them off and slag them off.

Apart from matters emanating out of cultural identity, which were necessarily omitted in this study, some respondents alluded that in terms of equality of employment, ethnic minority teachers were invisible. A Hindu year eleven boy from Psi Grove School said in relation to the small number of ethnic minority teachers in his school, 'I'd like to see a lot more than two Asian teachers... If the white teachers wanted to understand I am sure they could'.

The comments below from a Sikh year twelve boy from Psi Grove School on teachers were symptomatic of many from the selective schools. The view suggested that it was the ability of the teacher, irrespective of their ethnicity, which made greatest significance. The respondent articulated that his relationship was strictly perfunctory with mainly white teachers. He stated,

We get on all right. I might not like them, it's just because of the way they teach. But I've never disliked them. There have never been any bad words or anything. [A good teacher is] somebody that actually teaches the class than turn away to the board... keeps writing away. There is usually one person in the department who turns away and writes on the board... and in the sixth form... you have to make up by asking other teachers to help you... outside lessons... to compensate.

The respondent added further on the fact that Psi Grove School contained only two South Asian (or ethnic minority) teachers at the time of the study. He suggested that because of their ethnicity, he formed more constructive relationships,

Mr. Khan, although he is Asian, it doesn't really show. Mr. Singh is like pure bred Asian. He's got all the Asian traits... the Asian accent. They're both okay I mean. I reckon I do get on better with them... cause when we do meet it's more personal – between five or six of us... you just tend to be more relaxed.

An East African Muslim year twelve respondent from Psi Grove School commentated on the importance of teachers as the potential fulcrum for positive relations, irrespective of ethnicity. He said,

I think relationship was the same as with any other teacher... It wasn't really different in anyway at all... I don't think it really makes a difference as long as they know how to teach those subject to those pupils. The teachers knew a lot about the all the faiths, different religions... and they accepted that and they tried to help where they could... really... and I think that was a positive thing to do and it worked really well.

In essence, the culture and ethos of schools were essential in developing the overall attitudes of persons interacting within and with it (pupils, parents and teachers). High academic standards in selective schools and an aspiration to achieve exceptional GCSE scores year-on-year led to teachers driven to improve standards. Although in the grammar schools, almost of half all pupils in both Rosebud Psi Grove schools were ethnic minorities, teachers were nevertheless required to consider the achievement of all pupils *per se*.

The perspectives of respondents from comprehensive school pupils towards South Asian teachers were also evaluated. A Hindu year eleven St Aiden's schoolgirl said, 'teachers [South Asian]... give other Asian pupils a bit of time... I think they [pupils] would have felt better if there were more Asian teachers in school'. The majority of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls highlighted the potential additional benefits of co-ethnic¹ teachers. A comment below by a Pakistani year eleven girl from New Heath School was representative of many. It is indicative of the way in which pupils may well have felt a need for improved pupil-teacher relations in the first instance. That is, pupils may well have required an added dimension to existing pupil-teacher relations precisely because of ethnicity. She said,

I don't think that it's got anything to do with the colour of your skin. I think it's the quality of your teaching. But, I suppose it is a bonus that they are Asian. I think it is good on a cultural basis because, if say you have a girl that has got a problem at home... and it's an Asian problem say... then she can relate it to the Asian staff I think.

¹ Co-ethnicity refers to ethnic minority groups with shared religious, cultural and linguistic characteristics.

The respondent added that although distinctions existed between the different types of teachers based on ethnicity, there were other more qualitative facets deemed important in evaluating the appropriateness of teachers. That is, judgement was based on the ability of the teacher to be effective *per se*. The above Pakistani year eleven girl from New Heath School added in relation to one teacher thought to be especially limiting. Her remark at the end of the quotation is indicative of the prevailing attitudes of most pupils from New Heath, Longlake and St Aiden's schools on teachers. That is, effectiveness before ethnicity. She said,

It is the way they talk... there are actually one or two teachers. Its just their tone of voice... they way they project their opinions. There is one teacher... you can tell... he's got a picture of the queen on his wall and he actually told us once, when the bell went and we all got up to leave, "What do you think you are, American kids?" Presumably kids lack discipline and are difficult and to control and I think this is what he meant by that. [In general, the teachers] most of them treat us quite equally... and if they didn't I don't really care... as long as I get my grades.

Finally, a Pakistani year ten girl from Longlake School was especially positive about the potential benefits of co-ethnic teachers and adjoined, 'all the Asians are very happy to see that the Asians are now coming in to teach. It makes them feel proud to see that the Asians can do something'.

In essence, pupils from the comprehensive schools ascertained the suitability and acceptability of their teachers primarily based on their capacity to teach adequately, irrespective of the 'type' of teacher involved. In the comprehensive schools, pupils considered co-ethnic teachers necessarily for co-ethnic issues.

II. College students

College students were asked how well they related to their teachers at school. Table 7.1 shows that responses tended to be mixed in the main but were generally inclined

towards the positive. However, 18 per cent of the South Asians observed that they ‘got on really badly with only one or two teachers’, and nearly one-quarter of all respondents acquiesced ‘there were some teachers that did not like me for some reason’. There was no tendency for South Asian groups to differ in relation to the aforementioned statements.

Table 7.1 College students: relationships with schoolteachers

Relations With Teachers	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
I Got On Really Well With All My Teachers	10 (66)	22 (58)	23 (44)	55 (52)
There Were Some Teachers That Did Not Like Me For Some Reason	2 (13)	9 (24)	17 (33)	28 (26)
I Got On Really Badly With Only One Or Two Teachers	3 (19)	6 (16)	10 (19)	19 (18)
I Did Not Get On Well With The Vast Majority Of My Teachers	1 (6)	1 (3)	2 (4)	4 (4)
Total	16 (100)	38 (100)	52 (100)	106 (100)

Respondents were also asked who they would blame if they did not do well in their education. Table 7.2 below shows the results by South Asian ethnicity. Of the three South Asian groups, Pakistanis and Indians were more likely to be critical of their teachers, with 51 and 42 per cent consecutively agreeing to the words, ‘yes, some teachers were simply not that good’.

Table 7.2 College students: blaming self or teacher

Blaming Self Or Teacher	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Yes, Some Teachers Were Simply Not That Good	4 (25)	16 (42)	27 (51)	47 (44)
No Way, I Would Only Blame Myself For Not Working Hard Enough	10 (63)	18 (47)	21 (4)	49 (46)
It Is Really A Joint Effort Between The Pupil And Teacher	1 (6)	3 (8)	4 (8)	8 (7)
I Was Not Given A Chance	1 (6)		1 (2)	2 (2)
No, Did Not Blame Anyone But Tried To Work Hard!	-	1 (3)	-	1 (1)
Total	16 (100)	38 (100)	53 (100)	107 (100)

Of the total sample, however, half of all college students disclosed that they would consider their own failings first, interestingly with Bangladeshis half as much more

likely than Indians and 16 times more than Pakistanis to agree to this notion. Bangladeshis were very much more likely to blame themselves. Therefore, there are wider cultural forces at work, which are able to encourage different South Asian groups to rationalise the role teachers play in their achievements.

In highlighting written statements made by college students, the respondent below was sure that he was central to his own educational achievement but went on to highlight that he believed racism did exist in the system and that some pupils and students were potentially more disadvantaged than others because of it. A Sikh girl from St Margaret's College inscribed, 'throughout my secondary education, I felt that teachers constantly stereotyped Asian pupils'. Additionally, a Pakistani student (no other information given) from James Watt College wrote on the survey,

There was no motivated teachers to motivate the pupils and all in all I had an overall feeling I was there because I have to. I will not under absolutely any circumstance send those I love to any comprehensive school or in fact even my worst enemy.

The two open-ended statements below are quoted verbatim from the college survey returns. These Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls argued that they experienced surreptitious or even open racism in their schools. The first quote is from a Bangladeshi girl from James Watt College and the second from a Pakistani girl from St Margaret's College.

[A] I very strongly feel that last year at college I was let down by my GCSE English Tutor because from my point of view he only took note of the white students on the same table and whenever we asked for help the teacher came for a while then went off again to the other desk where there were white students asking for help and he would spend quite a lot of time with them. Due to this I could have passed my GCSE English but I ended up with a D.

[B] I believe that if I had gone to a better secondary school I would have done better in my A-levels. I did biology, chemistry and English literature and didn't get the grade I needed in biology. I re-took my biology and did 1 year intensive psychology and am now waiting for my results. The sixth form I went to was excellent, except for my English teachers who were very negative. I also believe that my religion has helped me to get to where I want in my education.

My English teachers in college I felt were racist and very negative and I tried very hard to get the grade in English literature that I neglected my other subjects a bit. But my English teacher told me I would never get into university into a good degree. I think that affected my education.

A Pakistani student from St Margaret's College put in writing the importance in his mind of teachers, relating his experiences effusively. He believed that it was crucial to develop a mutually respectful relationship between South Asian pupils and white teachers based on trust and commitment. He wrote,

The presence of a teacher in a students life is profoundly important. Teachers by students are seen as a representative or microcosm of the whole society, if not the country. It is not unrealistic to say that the feelings carried by a student of a particular teacher can decide the direction of his/her life in the world.

I carried my disdain for teachers into college, where not only my feelings, but life was to change. It is all down to one female English teacher. It was either through literature or the caring personality of the teacher that a change to my thinking was made. The teacher and literature are indistinguishable for me. Through literature and the help of the teacher I have come closer to humanity, understanding and religion. Most importantly I have found some identity in the society for which we had been treated as 3rd class citizens; thus in preparation for 'good jobs'.

I am not saying that the 'beauty of literature' or my 'English teacher' will change the lives of all black students. But, there is 'something' and a 'particular teacher' somewhere that can change your life. I have been blessed that I had found the things to change my life. Now out of love of literature and love for and credit to my teacher, I hope to also change lives for the better by teaching.

The teacher's power to control the students life is what is frightening. If the teachers guide and help discover the talents of students, rather than shove 'knowledge' down throats, we will have an epidemic of 'lives changing'.

A Sikh A level female student from St Margaret's College also wrote about her wider educational experiences. The comment is indicative of the type of realities lived by South Asian students in an intensely competitive educational environment. Having spent a period in the independent education sector, she emphasised in her own words the differences between two fundamentally different modes of education,

I would like to make a disturbing comment from personal experience that there

is more prejudice/racism in private sector education and in sixth form colleges because this is a critical time where there is a race for university places.

I have found that white students are often given more assistance by teachers and that they tend to offer college resources first to white students in a subtle manner. Maybe this is because I have never attended an institution which such a high proportion of students from ethnic minorities. I have also noticed that in a classroom white students sit on one side of a classroom with black students on the other side. This illustrates the intense competitive atmosphere at this level of education.

I have found these experiences quite shocking and more defensive as a student coming from an ethnic minority.

A final comment here from a Pakistani female student from James Watt College is on how the perception of religion affected her time at secondary school. The respondent wrote down that she felt isolated and eventually insecure about her academic abilities,

Teachers are not able to understand the concept [religion]. Most had a secular feeling towards religion, this was reflected in the teaching.

My religion has meant I am always stereotyped mainly negatively, I feel this has strongly influenced in lack of confidence in classwork.

The above statements are evocative of the significance of the teacher-pupil relationship based on popular perceptions of the *other*. Respondents were divided as to whether they would blame themselves or their teachers for underachieving. Bangladeshis and Pakistanis were least likely to have related well with teachers with a small number of statements made by college students on teachers that were fairly disparaging. South Asian teachers, however, were not regarded any more highly than white teachers were, unless considered to provide additional benefits because of their co-ethnicity.

III. Parents

In determining the perceptions of South Asian parents towards teachers and schools, parents from higher social class backgrounds were found to be less critical of teachers,

whereas parents from lower class backgrounds more critical. The comments below originate from parents with children in independent schools, the first from a professional Hindu father and the second from a professional Hindu mother.

[2] I think that by and large we were very happy with the teachers he had at school, as is evidenced by his results.

[21] If the other children are okay in the class, you can't blame the teacher.

Parents felt a degree of faith in results from independent schools and that the values, codes and ethos of schools would be positively impressed onto their children. Professional parents were asked where they would lay the blame of educational underachievement if it were found to occur. The first response comes from a professional Hindu mother with daughters at Omega High School and the second from an East African Muslim professional father with sons at 'Omega High for boys'.

[21] If she didn't do as well as he wanted to then. I wouldn't blame any one part of the system. There has to be contributing issues... with her own ability perhaps to an extent...with teachers not understanding her...meaning perhaps I didn't create the right environment.

[8] I personally feel from my experience that quite a fair amount of learning has to be done on your own. And, I think actually, I mean I wouldn't blame the school in the sense that obviously; like all pupils and temperaments are different.

Many parents that largely believed the school would maintain the education of their children and direct involvement was of lesser importance. The broad distinction between these two sets of parents was eloquently epitomised by the following observation made by a middle class father with children at grammar schools [4],

In my mind, I think that parents are in two different camps. One sort of parents they seem to know the mechanics of the system and they have got knowledge and expertise to make the system for their favour. And then you have the other set of parents they leave everything to the teachers or to the schools, sort of lay back, sort of wait until it is too late, until they find there is nothing that they can

do. In terms of percentage, I find 75 per cent probably lay back and suddenly they wake up.

When a Sikh professional mother [26] was asked about whom she would blame she believed pupils underachieved because they lacked high expectations. She said,

I don't think it's a case of bad teachers, I think its a case of lower expectations of the children that are in there. You're going to have lower levels of expectations because the type of children that are in there. Children, who are naturally gifted, they are not going to be pushed enough, because the attention is directed at the children of lower level learning.

The Sikh mother viewed the high aspirations of certain South Asian pupils to be fundamental and regarded the family as decisive in their development. The respondent elaborated on how she felt the lack of 'expectations' hindered the educational potential of South Asian children. She said,

Expectations would come from the home in the first instance and then from the school. The school is there to teach a child. Ideally a child should be able to come into the school and want to learn as opposed to a child who wants to come into the school and disrupt the whole damn class. You know. They should have a child willing to learn; the will, the self-motivation has to be within the child; that will come from their surrounding community, their home in the first instance. Our people are too busy especially ladies gossiping about each other, picking fault at other people, instead of looking at their own situation.

In attempting to explore the views of South Asian parents towards teachers and schools, parents from lower social class backgrounds were more likely to be directly critical of school systems, particularly of non-selective schools located in inner cities.

A number of parents from lower social class backgrounds were disapproving of certain primary schools and some of their teachers. In discussing the context of South Asian Muslims from inner city areas attending their local schools, parents suggested it was the schools that were at fault and not members of the community. A working class Pakistani father [9] said,

Children are sent to school to get educated and if they come out with nothing who's to blame? I wouldn't lay my blame onto anybody, the results are there, and you are talking about thousands. In the last ten years, not many have fared well and this is your future community... future nation.

Why did it occur in the area?

There weren't enough places in nurseries and the education in primary school is poor. If you don't lay the foundations right, if they don't get nursery places, they don't get educated from the start at that age at three or four. Then they will fall back and then they aren't pushed enough in primary schools, when they move into secondary schools, they say these children are two years behind, three years behind, what can we do with them? So it's a vicious circle... If the child is not doing well at school he's not going to be interested in school is he? He's stuck in a science lesson, he can't do it, he is not going to be interested in going to school. Its motivation at the end of the day, why aren't the children motivated by the system? It's the system that is failing the children. Parents aren't. You talk to any parent they want their child to do well, they want their child to go on into further education, they want the best for their child. Blaming the parents is one of the things that the system does, it's the system that's failing the child.

A number of Muslim parents felt sure that it was paradoxical to put forward that English as a second language was a direct feature in the educational underachievement of, in particular, inner city children. A school governor of a local primary school and an unemployed Bangladeshi father [6] propounded that policymakers consistently showed 'different attitudes towards inner city schools'. He elaborated,

What's happened. Always they're using the inner cities for experiments and this sort of thing, but they're not telling the truth, this is the main fact. They say 'well we are this, we are that', actually this is not the case because United Kingdom is a multicultural and multiracial society. They are saying it in word. But they are not maintain it honestly and sincerely, they are not using it in action and then in inner-city school, they always say, English is the second language. That's why they are not doing the better. But I think this is the make excuse... because... when the inner-city children go to the outer-circle, there are no complaints at all. They're doing a lot better than European children. The main point is this, it is the attitude of the teacher, it is the aim of the teacher. This is the thing.

Other responses made by parents were on the whole more balanced. Respondents felt sure that parents and teachers could not be contemplated in isolation, as they did not operate independently of each other. An unemployed Pakistani father [14] with children

at New Heath School, on the question of whom to blame for educational underachievement said,

You can blame the teacher and you can also blame the child – if the child does not do any homework, or hesitates going or plays truant, then you are going to blame your child not the teachers. If the child attends regularly, and if there is still some problem, then it must be the staff... Sometimes I do blame school sometimes I do blame children because well... It is a difficult question again, if a child complains you just cannot throw it away at the same time you cannot challenge the teachers.

Translated from Urdu

Taken as a whole, parents provided mixed responses on how teachers were considered to have performed. A few implicated teachers directly. The variation among South Asian parents were such that higher social class parents tended to be less critical of teachers compared to their lower social class counterparts.

To illustrate the variety of responses, parents were further asked to elaborate on how they regarded South Asian teachers. Some of the more positive comments originating on South Asian teachers emerged with parents from lower social class backgrounds and lower educational achievement. They communicated that co-ethnic teachers created a positive environment for children to learn. Parents felt co-ethnic teachers were more useful because they were thought to be knowledgeable about the discrimination faced by ethnic minority groups and were also able to communicate positively with pupils and parents because of interaction based on forms of shared language and dialect. Poorer parents viewed co-ethnic teachers favourably, whereas more affluent parents expressed the desire for effective teachers *per se*.

It was found that the South Asian parents were of three broad distinctions. First, South Asian parents viewed English education based in part on the residuals of a colonial education system experienced in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan before migration (pre- and post-1947). Second, for economic migrants in Britain, the acclaim

that the English higher education has throughout the world and for working class South Asian parents has resulted in the adaptation of middle class values towards education. Third, the other *bona fide* dynamic for South Asian parents is the extent to which education is used as a form of economic and social mobility out of disadvantage and discrimination they experience in their daily lives. These parents would be regarded as part of the 'underclass' (cf. Rex and Tomlinson, 1979; Rex, 1988), aspiring to obtain a range of economic, social and cultural capitals.

7.3 South Asian religions and cultures within the home

South Asian family life and its relationships to education were explored through the views of pupils, students and parents. It is argued that as differing teachers in differing schools can affect South Asians of varied social class levels, an analysis of circumstances within the home permits the exploration of religious and cultural issues among South Asians that may also perhaps affect their education in schools.

To precisely measure religious influence upon education is difficult as it is affected by an array of factors. It is important nevertheless to conceptualise the relative importance that religion carries in the daily lives of individuals and its effect upon educational achievement through an exploration of the perceptions of various actors; pupils, students and parents.

I. School pupils

In first evaluating the experiences of selective school pupils, respondents were asked to elaborate on how they thought religion and its associated cultural characteristics affected their education at school. A Hindu year thirteen Psi Grove schoolboy felt his religion was 'less strict', for example, than Islam. He said,

My parents have always been religious as such. I am religious. I go to the temple. I pray at home whenever my parents do. That isn't a problem for me. I participate in all the religious activities as such. It's like which is more important right now. Let's say if I was a Muslim, I am not allowed to smoke or I am allowed to drink. I must admit I have drunk before and have smoked, if I was a Muslim all that peer group pressure that is there, from home, you shouldn't do this or you shouldn't do that, my religion is less strict.

For one respondent, religion began to carry less significance in his life. A Sikh year twelve Psi Grove schoolboy indicated that he had 'lost his faith' and was not driven by any definitive religious or cultural imperatives,

Me... I feel that I've lost my faith... it's just personal. I don't really believe in God anymore. I used to. I think the attitude is that you don't really care about religion any more. It causes hassle... religious does. I mean... your parents say that you can't do this or you can't do that. There are so many rules about it... no body wants it... you have your values... it's just the God thing... whether you believe in him or not. As far as my parents are concerned I do believe in God...

Another selective school respondent alluded that her household contained many religious artefacts and the expression of religion was necessarily persuasive. The year twelve Sikh Rosebud schoolgirl expressed, however, her religiosity was not as heightened it could have been,

Yes, quite. My grandmother is very and so is my granddad... my mom is kind of going that way now. My Aunt is. We don't go to the Gurdwara often... even though it's only five minutes down the road. I know I should go... but I just don't because I am lazy. We have photographs of Gurus and everything. Yes, we are quite religiously orientated.

Conversely, Muslim respondents often related cases of added involvement with the religion of Islam. A year ten Pakistani (Shia) Rosebud schoolgirl talked about her religious activities,

I go to the mosque a lot and. There's youth clubs there... and I go out with my friend's... visit the cinema together. I really don't have time for anything [else]. I just go to the Mosque a lot and I am involved in so many meetings there. I haven't got time for other clubs and stuff... I don't wanna go out anyway.

So, you are very religious?

I 'd say I was, yes.

When did you start becoming this?

At nine I started doing it properly all the time... but before that I'd now and again... or most of the time or whenever I've remembered.

In close similarity to selective school pupils, pupils from the comprehensive schools were also conversational about religiosity and in particular experiences within the home.

A Bangladeshi year eleven New Heath schoolgirl expressed she was not as religious as she ought to have been. The views of this respondent were the only anomaly – no other Muslim pupil felt such ambiguity towards the religion of Islam as this respondent. She said,

I don't pray like five times or day of anything. I believe in it. My mom is like the most religious in the family. My dad's not really into it. He only goes to Mosque on Friday because my mom makes him... I used to go to this place and like this teacher used to read Arabic and that but... that was it. It was a two-hour thingy... going after school and at the weekend. I am not really that religious. My mom was like that you have to do it and that and my dad was like at the end of the day it's up to you.

A Pakistani year ten New Heath School schoolgirl articulated her feelings on the nature of Islam and how it was affected by living in Britain. Her outlook was holistic and concerned a wider view of Islam. She said,

I think a problem is that some people get culture and Islam mixed... and they think that you are not a Muslim if you wear *salwar-kameez*. Now *salwar-kameez* is just a style and they see that as part of Islam and its not.

I don't have to show externally that I am a Muslim though. It is obligatory to wear a Hijab... which I will do soon. I have to make sure my intentions are right before I do anything.

I am only seventeen... but I mean my parents want me to have a stable education... we've been brought up in Britain... obviously we are going to be influenced by the Western society.

What is discernible is that Muslim pupils and students were inclined to be far more devoted to their religion, such that they felt it broadened every aspect of their lives. It involved a specific adherence to the faith requiring time and religious observance. Here, the South Asian Muslim girls were more devout than Muslim boys.² In addition, the Muslim girls tended to stress the patriarchal culture of the home based on variations of Islam practised by South Asian Muslim parents. As one Bangladeshi year eleven girl from New Heath School put it, 'culture is the problem, not exactly the religion. Like... our parents they do not really believe in religion, they think about the culture'.

It is suggested that stricter adherence to religious (with cultural) precepts by Muslims increases the likelihood of negative impact upon schooling and that this is particularly true for Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls (cf. Haw, 1998; Hennick *et al.*, 1999). It has also been argued that other South Asian religions, for example Sikhism and Hinduism, affect their adherents differently. That is, to be a 'good' Sikh or Hindu is not as time- or resource-demanding as being a 'good' Muslim (cf. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1987; 1990).

II. College students

The college students were asked 'how do you feel about your religion and how do you act towards it?' Of the 106 [of 109] that responded positively to the question, 50 per cent, including 25 out of 50 Pakistanis, agreed to the statement that 'their faith was their guiding light'. Of all the Muslims in the sample, 49 per cent [34 out of 70] agreed to

² In a recent ethnographic study of South Asian Muslim females and their education, it was found that they developed a sense of British and Islamic identity based on the degree of 'freedom' and 'control' provided to them by their parents. These Muslim females recognised their Islamic heritage but they were also integrating into mainstream society more positively. Negotiation resulted in females remaining in education but forsaking male relationships (Basit, 1997a).

these words. Similarly, respondents were asked ‘do you think that your particular religion has an overtly cultural feel to it?’ Muslims conveyed greatest variation with their particular take-up of religion, whereas many of the Hindus stated that their religion was ‘meant to be cultural’. A further question was asked of college respondents ‘do you think that either your religion or culture have in any way disadvantaged your studies at school or college?’ Forty-eight per cent [51 out of 106] said ‘no’. It was not patent whether respondents had managed to negotiate their state of affairs in this respect simply because of the multi-faceted nature of religion. In terms of religious classification, 44 per cent of Muslims, 50 per cent of Sikhs and 58 per cent of Hindus answered ‘no’ to the question.

Table 7.3 below shows that three-quarters of the Muslims had been through supplementary schooling in comparison to approximately one-third Indians.³

Table 7.3 College students: attending religious supplementary schools

Supplementary School	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Yes	11 (69)	13 (35)	35 (66)	59 (56)
No	5 (31)	17 (46)	14 (26)	36 (34)
I Have Not Before But I Will Do Soon	-	3 (8)	1 (2)	4 (4)
I Used To Go For A Short Time	-	2 (5)	2 (4)	4 (4)
Sometimes/Occasionally	-	2 (5)	1 (2)	3 (3)
Total	16 (100)	37 (100)	53 (100)	106 (100)

A range of comments made, invariably by Bangladeshi and Pakistani South Asian Muslims, on the nature of religion within the home are elaborated upon below. They highlight how Muslim respondents considered the religion critical to their wishes and aspirations. A Pakistani girl from James Watt College put in writing,

I would like to point out that religion does not hinder but in fact promotes

³ From a recent study of educational decisions made within the home, it was found that Pakistani mothers were positive about separate Islamic education as the values of mainstream schooling were thought to be incongruent with those of Islam (Osler and Hussain, 1995).

education for both males and females. Though I must stress that these days parents are encouraging children to get an education, not necessarily for job opportunity but for personal achievement, especially girls.

The following comments originate from two Bangladeshi girls; the first from St Margaret's College and the second from James Watt College. They both contain strong links towards strict Islamic codes of practise that regard daily duty and an eternal devotion to the faith with the utmost of importance. They wrote,

[A] Although I am not particularly religious, religion I feel plays an important part in my education. I feel that without Allah's help and guidance, I would not have achieved so much.

[B] I personally feel that religion comes before your studies because you may be a manager in this world but you could be unemployed in the next when you die. But this isn't to say that you shouldn't study because my religion points out that you should try your best in whatever you are doing or are going to do.

College student respondents also elaborated on the nature of religion and how it affected relations outside of normal schooling hours. A Pakistani girl from James Watt College wrote on her questionnaire,

My parents encourage us to do well in education because they feel we will have a better life, but I think it is also connected to status in the community and of course marriage.

I personally think it is very important for a girl to be independent especially in Asian families which are patriarchal (headed by the authority and ruled by men). Basically I think our culture stinks and has nothing to do with religion, because women are too repressed within their own families. My parents are very understanding and broad-minded therefore I have no problems but many of my friends experience this. They are not allowed to do many things but their brothers are which is unjust and unfair, and it really annoys me! Islam is a beautiful religion which respects women, and honours women, but people especially men make rules which suit them and disadvantage women in many ways. Most Asian parents do not realise that India and Pakistan people are 'modernising' their ways, and Asians in Britain are 'left behind' holding on to 'old' traditional values, which are not important.'

The extent to which Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls have been affected negatively by the way in which the religion of Islam has been distorted and abused to subjugate

women was repeated in many transcripts and written statements. The statement below from a Pakistani from St Margaret's College is especially pertinent in its evocation of the compounded nature of religion and culture practised by some South Asian Muslims and how females were adversely affected as a consequence,

It is difficult to go through education if you are born of a generation who have immigrated to this country. You are torn between two cultures. In my culture, women are regarded as being of marriageable age as soon as they are 16 years of age. That is when the most important part of the education starts. My parents got me married at 19. I did not get any kind of qualification to get a job. All you hear is 'you can't do this' and 'you can't do that', 'the religion does not permit it', or 'the culture does not permit it', or 'what will people say'.

I felt torn between cultures. I even hated my religion, my culture, parents. But they were only like that because they had been brought up like that. Girls are restricted so much that some rebel against their parents. But I gave up and did what they wanted me to do.

Now after all these years I have the opportunity to further myself and it is a great feeling'.

Another Muslim female respondent elaborated further on some of the *bona fide* multi-level community issues she faced on a day-to-day basis. Although the sample of college students was random, it uncharacteristically included one respondent that was mature in terms of age. In normal instances, such information would not be used to exemplify the experiences of South Asian Muslim girls in education for this study because at the time of the original survey return, this particular Pakistani female respondent was aged twenty. It contains, however, the disturbing sentiments and experiences of a deeply distressed individual that tells of an agonisingly disheartening story. She wrote down the following and it is shown in its fullest form,

I've felt that your study is very biased because it's to do with school leavers. Why was I chosen I don't know. However, I am widow with a child who desperately needs an education as I was stopped from studying straight after leaving school (not unusual you may think) but I was lied to. I got a place at sixth form and was all ready to go when I was told my brother (4 years older than me) said I wasn't allowed to – but because of that they f****d up my life.

Now I am studying but they are not happy and are still trying to stop me.

Culture and society has ruined my life - also my mother's uneducated background hasn't helped. "The sons should be educated not the daughters", I'm only studying because I'm a widow who will not remarry but at the same time I'm stuck. I can't hurt my mother and I can't turn my back on her. In return I have no future and this will be my last year at college.

It makes me sick because I know I could have been a qualified lawyer given half the chance or qualified teacher but in return I just sit here envying others

Religion – respect and Islam offer equal rights to women. culture I can't stand and do answer people back – it's just a job for bored housewives.

Mother – I'd wish she'd realise I'm not a lost cause, that I do have brains and can be successful if only she backed me up.

Teachers at school and college knew I had it in me to be someone and I got on with almost every teacher (except for a few) and pupil - everyone knew me and enjoyed my company. I was mature for my age.

Culture and society destroyed and will keep destroying my ability to be a someone and there isn't a damn thing I can do about it. Even though I am strong I have my limits. I wish I studied and achieved a goal which everyone knew I would be successful in, because I have/had the ability to understand people and work as a secret agony aunt because it is not acceptable in my family. Everyone made it but me, I didn't get the chance because I was so bubbly, now the champagne has lost its bubbles and life drags on.

Sorry I think I've lost it anyway. I hope this makes some sense and helps you achieve what you were looking for.

I'm an outcast because I was born and brought up here, everyone else was born in Pakistan (the black sheep of the family). I'm an outcast in society because I'm not backwards and not a bored housewife and I'm a widow. I'm an outcast at home because I'm open minded and down to earth, not a snob, not a materialist like the rest. Which way do I go – I fit in nowhere. Ha! No seriously. laugh as much as you want, I know you weren't expecting this. Ha!

College students were asked to determine the religiosity of parents. Tables 7.4 and 7.5 below show the perceived religiosity rates respectively for mothers and fathers of college students. The high rates, particularly for the mother, can be seen from the tables below. All the fathers were thought to be less 'religious' on average than mothers.

Table 7.4 College students: on mother religiosity

Mother Religiosity	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Very Much So	12 (75)	23 (64)	31 (60)	66 (63)
Not At All Intensely	1 (6)	10 (28)	13 (25)	24 (23)
They Believe, But They Do Not Practise It	3 (19)	3 (8)	8 (15)	14 (13)
Total	16 (100)	36 (100)	52 (100)	104 (100)

Table 7.5 College students: on father religiosity

Father Religiosity	Bangladeshi (%)	Indian (%)	Pakistani (%)	Total (%)
Very Much So	7 (47)	17 (49)	25 (50)	49 (49)
Not At All Intensely	4 (27)	13 (37)	12 (24)	29 (29)
Believe, But They Do Not Practise It	3 (20)	5 (14)	7 (14)	15 (15)
Not At All	1 (7)	-	6 (12)	7 (7)
Total	15 (100)	35 (100)	50 (100)	100 (100)

Many of the college students, apart from being critical of parent practise of Islam because of its strong cultural associations, offered positive written remarks on their religion, their culture and the roles of parents. For these respondents, their parents, Islam and the values towards education were intertwined. An Indian Muslim female student from Margaret’s College noted down on her questionnaire,

I feel that I have been encouraged to a full extent to achieve an education, from my parents. They have always wished that I have a good education. My teachers at college have been fully supportive in my work. If I had any difficulties they would always be willing to help me overcome my difficulty.

I think that my religion has given a positive side to my education, as religion advises you to gain an education, and my parents and I respect this advice and follow it. My culture, I feel, has supported me in achieving an education, because my most people in my family have had educational achievements.

A Bangladeshi female student from James Watt College also supplemented her survey return by writing that she believed the religion of Islam to be a positive re-enforcer of her educational achievements,

I would not like to add much. I only like to say I am happy with what I've got and what I've achieved. My Religion and my culture means everything to me. And for the lack of education, I wouldn't blame anyone else because at the end of

the day there's only one person to blame and that is myself.

And my family has been a great help to me about my educational life.

A Pakistani male student from James Watt College wrote down similar sentiments and felt that it was important to be proud of such important religious characteristics,

I feel perfectly comfortable with my religion and culture, in fact I am proud, and believe that no-one should ever feel ashamed of their own religion. another something I haven't mentioned in the above statement is the other courses that I am studying while still in education at [James Watt College]...

A Pakistani female student also from James Watt College wrote about Islam in a similarly positive way. She considered the importance of her religion because of its values and principles. She inscribed,

I personally feel that religion comes before your studies because you may be a manager in this world but you could be unemployed in the next when you die. but this isn't to say that you shouldn't study because my religion points out that you should try your best in whatever you are doing or are going to do.

Parents shape the religious and cultural orientation of homes in many differing life directions. It is shown that students on average thought their parents to be religious. South Asian Muslim students seemed to regard their religion with greater commitment. Here, some South Asian Muslims, especially Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls, were more likely to be strong adherents as well as cognisant of some of the limitations of their parent's practises. Religion and culture it is suggested therefore only in reality emerged as a dilemma for the South Asian Muslim groups.

III. Parents

Parents were also questioned about the role of religion and culture within the home. A professional Hindu mother [24] with daughters at Omega High School talked about her

religion and culture in relation to other religions. The mother described in her own words the nature of difference between the various South Asians,

We are Hindus. But we are sort of you know not as religious as I suppose Muslims in the same class. I mean they would still be coming to the school, in the evening going to the prayers and going out to the Madrassas and things like that. So it's more built into them. They (the daughters) went to Church of England so obviously they learnt more about Christianity, though in RE they learnt about all the religions. I mean they (the daughters) don't know much about their religion, their own religion like we don't know as much. Whether we were Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs whatever, I don't think it would have made any difference.

In contrast, a middle-class Muslim father [8] with sons at 'Omega High for boys' talked about the positive impact of Islam within the home. It was asked of this parent what effect religion had on the educational achievement of his sons,

I am quite a bit lapsed in my practice and my wife she prays and she fasts and observes the Majlis and everything. I am quite surprised, both of them [the sons] but particularly the older one without any compulsion certainly I mean he does not see an example set by myself, this is my wife doing it. Both of them without any compulsion do Ramadan.

In exploring the views of parents from lower social class backgrounds, the question of the role of religion within the home was asked. A part-time employed 'mixed-race' mother [22] with daughters at St Aiden's School said that Islam was a binding force,

Well there is standards and respect and that, I think that it does help. Yeah. Cause a lot of children without religion haven't got that respect that you should have.

An unemployed Pakistani father of four [17] also commented on the religiosity of the individual and how it affected the educational achievement of Bangladeshi and Pakistani children. His view was characteristic of many Pakistani fathers adamant that the instruction of religion would be encouraging rather than restraining,

I think that it makes no difference on education, the reason being, this Islamic teaching that they learn, I know of children that have recited the whole of the Koran, and {they are still going to university and going to college, they are very bright ... very very bright} ... If it was going to make any difference, obviously they would be behind, but this is not so.

Translated from Punjabi {} indicates original use of English

For Hindu pupils and students adherence to their faith did not affect their normal day-to-day home lives to such an extent that it took time away from school learning and associated activities. In this respect, they would appear to have outwardly integrated into society given the higher social class positions that many parents occupied. The education sought by the Sikhs was similar to that of Hindus, specifically a result of higher socio-economic standards and living. Religious codes of practise and behaviour compelled Muslims to Islam. It resulted in extra familial demand to ensure that children learned the basic systems of Islamic belief, and, if deemed appropriate, in religious supplementary classes after school (cf. Joly, 1989).

In general, the viewpoints of parents reflected their own differing educational levels, occupational status and religion take-up rate. Given that the educational perspectives expressed here are just a microcosm of the entire picture they nevertheless help to illustrate the effect of religion and culture upon education exogenously and endogenously; how they exist inside as well as outside of the workings of the home or are part of a wider South Asian culture. Muslims tend to be stronger adherents to religion irrespective of social class or school effect and, as such, it has particular ramifications for South Asian Muslim groups in schools and colleges in Birmingham.⁴

⁴ Based on the surveying of ethnic minority school children from comprehensive schools in Wales, it was found that Muslim females and males were least acculturated into society. The reasons for this related to the vast gulf experienced between the home and school. The home lives of respondents were driven by the needs of the collective rather than the individual. This was further compounded, when differences emerged between the attitudes of genders in education. Males were in the main given considerably more importance than females, whereas the schools promoted more equalised gender roles. Followers of the Muslim religion saw that

7.4 Discussion

Research has continued to show that parenting appears more important than schooling in relation to achievement in secondary school – given also such factors as teacher-pupil ratios (Feinstein and Symons, 1999). Presently in the education system, parents are *apparently* provided increased opportunities to become further involved with schools (Vincent, 1995). Not all parents, however, are able to take advantage. In addition, teachers can sometimes relate to South Asian parents without taking into consideration their economic and social circumstances, ‘parent’s perceptions of teachers as superior and distant is reinforced by teachers’ own stance’ (Crozier, 1999, p. 327).

A study of Muslim mothers from Northern England conducted over a decade ago showed that they regularly provided their daughters with opportunities to excel (Afshar, 1989). A progressive attitude towards further and higher education was found in this study, from all South Asian groups, however, in Afshar’s (1989) study there was still concern that daughters might go astray. Other studies on South Asian parents and their children on choosing certain educational paths by gender found that it was only the uninformed fathers who insisted their daughters did not carry on in education (Shaikh and Kelly, 1989). Overwhelmingly, research on South Asian Muslim parents in the 1980s tended to find them reticent about allowing their daughters to continue in education after a certain age. In this study, it was found that South Asian girls were just as much likely to be encouraged towards achieving in education as the boys. Throughout the 1990s, in an increasingly competitive educational environment, the South Asian girls have indeed accelerated ahead of the South Asian boys in all subject areas and at

it was important to retain family norms and values. It was argued by Ghuman (1997) that Muslims from South Asia have a line of religiosity which carries with it elements of the culture, which is subsequently maintained in the host society. In contrast, the Hindu religion,

both GCSE and A level.⁵

In other more recent ethnographic studies on South Asians in education, pupils were found to have achieved the grades they wished with the support of parents. Pupil aspirations were found to have been engineered from within the home as well as through the dedication and resilience of pupils (cf. Basit, 1997; Bhatti, 1999; Debnath, 1998; Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1997; Haque, 1999; Haw, 1998). In this study, it was through the mechanisms that exist within the home and the close working relationships between parents and their children that success was ultimately achieved.

The need to succeed in education is in part determined by the influence of parents who, it seems, have different levels of access to knowledge on the way in which success is best acquired. Many Muslims enter their local schools in the inner city. These schools are under-resourced and teaching tends to be of inferior quality in comparison to their selective-school counterparts. It could be said that the reason for Muslim educational underachievement is founded on a range of factors. That is, it is not just their prevailing economic and social circumstances but educational disadvantage is also

in existence for much longer not only is tolerant of surviving alongside new religions but also offers greater equality towards women as seen in the worshipping of female deities.

⁵ Recent research on South Asian females and relationships formed in school and away at university have shown the extent of difference between groups. White females had different socialising patterns; family oriented values and activities, and formed sexual relationships in a different way. White females developed sexual relationships with males often at a very early age. South Asian females did not because of cultural taboos, cultural norms and parental control. Muslim females were discouraged from entering into relationships with males. Any relationships formed tended to be hidden from parents as it would cause embarrassment for their parents in the community. Indeed, South Asian females were expected to remain chaste until marriage. Many of the females in the study expected an arranged marriage. The marriagability scenario tended to apply less for Hindu females compared with Sikh or Muslim counterparts. Alternatively, another sample of South Asian females that had left home either to attend university or work, had altered their relationship patterns significantly. South Asian females were influenced by new peer groups which looked upon sexual relations outside of marriage more openly. Although, here, South Asian females were moving away from the situations of arranged marriages, these South Asian females did not want to disrespect the wishes of the family in the long run (Hennick *et al.*, 1999).

based on the way in which the religion of Islam (and as such Muslim groups in the West) has been 'demonised' in society. It has the effect of making everyday British Muslims increasingly regarded by the majority as a threat or distinctly hostile to western norms and values. It has implications for the way in which British South Asian Muslims are perceived and how they relate to individuals from the host society, such that more recently formed negative perceptions based on religion add to and reinforce the pre-existing ethnicisation of South Asian Muslim groups.

As such, British Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are thought by indigenous inhabitants in terms of an economic and social pariah. At the same time, in the Western world, where anti-Islamic sentiment is at its highest, Muslims in Britain are peculiarly disadvantaged. The experience is part of a complex form of cultural and structural racism affecting Muslim groups. At the same time, debate on what it means to be British and/or English is at the fore.⁶ One specific dimension of the changing fortunes of British South Asian Muslims has been the extent to which they have aligned themselves closer to religious rather than national identities. The development is based on the recognition by second and third generation South Asian Muslims of an Islam-proper as well as being sympathetic to the experiences of other Muslims across the world.⁷

⁶ The Salman Rushdie Affair, The Gulf War (1990-1991), Bosnia-Herzegovia (1993-1998), the Oklahoma Bombing (1996) and more recently the Taliban (1997-), Grozny (1999) and (Kosova, 1999) have all placed Muslims at the heart of media and news controversy (Asad, 1990; Ahmed, 1992; Kundnani, 2000; Modood, 1990; 1998). At the end of the twentieth century, British Muslims are found to be under greater scrutiny especially in the light of ever-turbulent changes in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and South East Asia (Ahmed, 1995; Peach and Glebe, 1995; Halliday, 1996; Runnymede Trust, 1997). To the British public at large, Muslims are increasingly seen as a threat to British society. It has led to the strengthening of structures, both local and regional, for many Muslim groups across Britain. It has resulted in greater identification with Islam by British Muslims than ever before. Muslims in Britain have increasingly identified themselves with a wider Islamic identity, one that transcends national, linguistic and regional affiliation (Samad, 1998).

⁷ Combining together questions of religious and ethnic identity is a complex position. It involves not only an analysis of ethnic and religious ties but it also incorporates notions of religious observation. Based on a recent study, it was found that young Pakistanis identified

In determining whether it is parents or teachers that are the most significant in the educational achievement of South Asians, it was found that the outcome depended on the type of South Asian group in question as well as the effect of schools. All South Asian groups wished for success but it was apparent that there was clear divergence between the experiences of Muslims (Bangladeshi and Pakistani) in relation to Indians (Hindu and Sikh) groups. The foundation rested on a capital and knowledge discrepancy between South Asian groups as well as the way in which religion and culture affect groups. Hindus have largely integrated into society, whereas South Asian Muslims in British society have been increasingly regarded, particularly in the 1990s, as 'fundamentalist'. Antiracist educationists would argue that racism embedded in institutions leads to South Asian Muslims trapped in economic and social exclusion. Here, the negative actions of teachers and deleterious school policies affect the performance of pupils. Multicultural educationists would argue that it is because of a lack of English within the home, coupled with adverse cultural practises and disengagement with the school that leads to underachievement.

The final empirical chapter of this study explores the views of teachers on how South Asians perform in education more holistically.

themselves more with an Islamic rather than a British, English or a Pakistani identity. Not only do individuals make a distinction between a religious and an ethnic identity but these ethnic identities are 'clear cut'. Religion is without doubt a defining characteristic of any ethnic group but it cannot, 'be assumed that religious identity is necessarily subsumed by ethnic identity' (Jacobson, 1997, p. 238; see also Modood, 1994a).

CHAPTER EIGHT

TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

8.1 Introduction

The way in which teachers perceive pupils and students and interact with them is critical to their education. Teachers, based on their norms and values, form a perception of the *other* through a process of characterisation. Relations, however, have been found to be compounded at the level of the ethnic minority pupil and the white teacher (Wright, 1986; Gillborn, 1990; CRE, 1992). It is important therefore, to determine how the teachers from the sampled schools and colleges perceived South Asians, interacted with them and where issues emerged developed appropriate home-school links to improve communications between pupils, parents and schools, ultimately raising their academic performance.

8.2 Teachers on gender and religion

Highlighted in previous chapters have been examples illuminating that the educational career paths of Bangladeshi and Pakistani Muslim girls were often different compared with boys, in essence because of factors associated with the religio-cultural norms and values of certain South Asian groups. Therefore, it is important to explore additional areas of divergence between Muslim and non-Muslim girls and boys: in effect, the reasons for the different experiences of Bangladeshi and Pakistani boys and girls in comparison to Indian and, in particular, through the views and opinions exclusively of teachers.

The policy at Psi Grove School has been that Muslim boys are provided every encouragement to pursue their religion, particularly at times of calendar activity. The ability of Muslim boys to be in a position to practise their faith was celebrated by the

school. An Indian teacher [14] from Psi Grove School added on the matter,

With Muslim boys because of their prayers, etc., you might find that they go off as a group on Friday lunchtime to do their prayer at the local mosque but I think as a school in general we try and encourage them to talk about their religion and the school does provide facilities for them. Muslim boys can go upstairs into a room and say, 'I want to pray'. If a particular group had problems then the school in general would speak to the parents and say look this is interfering with your son's education, etc. and to a large extent, I find that parents back up what we say... Yes, we are sympathetic to individual groups.

At Longlake School, it was felt that both South Asian girls and boys were achieving on par with others and the school had also made attempts to work with parents in reassuring them the interests of their children were placed first. The deputy head emphasised the way in which the school had made efforts to improve its relations with Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents. He talked about South Asian Muslim parents sometimes removing their daughters from school, but that it was a phenomenon less significant than before. Nevertheless, the deputy head [11] of Longlake School understood that it was quite possible for some of the South Asian Muslim girls to be removed from education after compulsory school leaving age. He said,

I think that's beginning to move. A lot of work goes on, where we do meet that sort of resistance with encouraging parents to accept that actually its in the interests of their children to move forwards with their own education whether they're boys or girls, I mean its still in there. I think the issue for us is that the parents for whom that is more of an issue don't send their girls to Longlake in the first place, they send them to all girls schools. Fall out tends to be 15-16 than maybe post-16, because there are still large numbers of girl students disappearing from schools post-15. When I say large number that's just hearsay, I have to be careful of what I say I suppose, but I know from colleagues in all girls schools that that is still a significant issue for them.

Indeed, the deputy head [12] of New Heath School felt that there were specific reasons for the sixth form's expansion that were related to issues of gender. That is, the early successes of the school's sixth form were partly based on the high numbers of South Asian Muslim girls that stayed on for further education. He said,

We have every year increased our numbers of boys even to this year we have a new topic in our IT and that's increased the number of boys wanting to stay with us but I do put that down to a fairly straight forward factor that within the community the only option for our girls is to stay on at New Heath school because parents and family will let them stay at New Heath so they come back to us. If they wish to travel to other schools they wouldn't be allowed to, New Heath school or bust, whereas many of the boys they want to leave the area, they want to travel, they are allowed to travel freely and so they do move out and also we are again trying to break a trend, it has been a trend for the boys and many of the bright girls to go to {X, Y, or Z college} and they follow trends. But, we have been working hard for the last two years and we are now starting to attract more boys and we are starting to keep some of our brighter pupils so...

Where incongruities did arise between the interests of the schools in relation to those of certain South Asian Muslim parents, it was felt that matters were improved by educating parents. Attempts were made to bridge the cultural divide separating the religious and cultural norms and values of teachers and schools with those of South Asian parents and their children.

The deputy head [12] of New Heath School felt that the withdrawal of some Bangladeshi and Pakistani girls from education was something that was not going to disappear quickly. He said,

We tried very very hard, but I must say with regards the cultural situation of families, I foresee that it isn't until we move into another generation of parents that we may be able to bridge that gap and then I do think that when we've got parents who have been through the process themselves then they will possibly think differently and that sort of different way of thinking will come through to their family. But, they are very honest views that you have to respect... and sometimes it's not for us to try and break a very strong cultural view. It is difficult ground sometimes even though our parents and I would attribute this to our success, even though our parents are very respectful of the teachers of this school.

The respondent also spoke about the nature of gender differences in relation to academic performance and explained the underlying reasons for variations. He re-iterated that there were real differences between the ways in which South Asian Muslim boys and girls were perceived. Specifically, it was argued that the diametrically opposed social and cultural expectations of genders affected individuals. He said,

I would say that some of the problems we have with our boys are that they approach things in quite an arrogant manner... that they almost feel that they are going to achieve because, "I want to because of who I am". I think probably because of my own experiences away from this country as well, it is a cultural situation with some of the boys where within their families, they are spoilt, looked upon as a protégés and leading members of the family. But the girls work, they get their heads down and they work and so many of our girls who aren't even near the ability levels of the boys achieve far better than them because they work jolly hard. The school now within its development plan; one of its main focuses is to raise boys' achievement. However, whatever we do to raise boys achievement seems to raise girls at the same time because they respond to any strategies that we are putting forward and they are even trying everything now from some single sex teaching in English, particularly trying to tempt the boys with a different type of literature than the girls; sporting literature, scientific literature which seems to motivate them to stay with a book.

A white teacher [8] from an inner city comprehensive school felt that the cultural attributes of South Asian girls suggested that they performed better compared than other ethnic minority groups. It was stressed that it was a function of being separated from other forms of socialisation experienced by boys. Differentiation it was argued revealed itself in the form of behavioural variations between ethnicities and genders. She said,

I mean girls are outperforming boys across racial divides. I mean it's the biggest hot story at the moment and again questions have been asked as to why. I know that African-Caribbean boys are the highest excluded whereas I cannot think of a girl that has been excluded in five years here. So, the behaviour problems don't seem to be there for all girls.

A senior lecturer from St Margaret's College [23] believed that Pakistani students at the college were especially active and took certain approaches to issues when they arose. It was argued that the South Asian Muslim students tended to congregate closely around the Islamic society of the college. It is where, it was maintained, gender differences were played out and often in the name of religion, when in fact they were informed by South Asian cultures. She said,

We have one group of students here who have their own student organisation and that's Muslims and there are two things that have happened here. One is that there is a very active Islamic society, which take place on Wednesday afternoon and when anything is asked of ethnic minority students they are

always very vocal and very well organised too and in fact students in Guild elections sometimes vote for community groups. But the other thing that they have is that we've got prayer facilities here now and we had a lot of hassle about that two years ago. It used to be very informal, people would ask us if they could use our room and it was rotated and now we have prayer facilities in what used to be a changing room and I have never been in there but students have a certain amount of material in there and as they've got a priority on that area. But, its not always been a terribly satisfactory from the girls' point of view. I have a bit of a problem in terms of my own ideas about gender, e.g., I let students use this room for an Islamic society meeting and I come past and I see that all the girls are at the back, behind a screen, or the boys told the principal when he came in that, "it was alright – the girls didn't need any prayer facilities!"

The deputy head teacher [11] of Longlake School also believed that there were some concerns with, in particular, Pakistani boys. There was an apparent apprehension about how they behaved and how they related to teachers. It was stressed that this was far more of a cultural feature than religious. He disclosed,

There are still one or two issues with some of the Muslims boys about Muslim women teaching that one might not be too happy with if one were a good Muslim in terms of the level of respect but I think that's more about culture than it is about religion and that's again something that continues to raise its head. That the kids use a religious tag for prejudices and behaviour traits that are nothing to do with Islam, that are to do with attitudes and behaviour which are social constructs, and that's very disappointing but we continue to challenge those behaviours and try and move people forward in their understanding, but some of those basic behaviour traits are very difficult to move forward.

An African-Caribbean head teacher [7] from an inner city comprehensive school was in no doubt that the recent rise in *all* girls outperforming boys had a simple explanation in his school. He remarked,

At the moment, we see girls doing a lot better then boys and this is no accident. Society whatever race, culture background we come from, we have been very sexist in our arrangements and so we will place a tighter reign on our girls, greater control, and greater freedom to our boys, etc. I am afraid our boys are beginning to misuse that freedom when they should be working; when they should be compensating and seeking to compensate for the problems which school present their way. They are exploring, taking advantage of this greater freedom, which they have over girls. Yes, without a doubt, they're not roaming the streets as the boys are doing so they're at home bored so they turn to their books [laughs]... mmm... that will be the answer.

Table 8.1 below shows the way in which girls were considered the better achievers in comparison to South Asian boys and how certain South Asian fathers were more likely to be ‘restrictive’ with their daughters compared to their sons.

Table 8.1 Teacher expectations: South Asian pupils by gender

Teachers On South Asian Pupils By Gender	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
Indian Girls Perform Best Of All	-	8 (14)	42 (72)	6 (10)	2 (3)	58 (100)
Pakistani Boys Perform Worst Of All	-	3 (5)	44 (69)	11 (17)	6 (9)	64 (100)
Fathers Are More Restrictive With Girls And Less With Boys	18 (29)	26 (42)	14 (23)	3 (5)	1 (2)	62 (100)
Asian Girls Perform Better Than Boys	6 (10)	20 (33)	30 (49)	4 (7)	1 (2)	61 (100)
Pakistani And Bangladeshi Girls Will Be Removed From Schooling At The Age Of Sixteen	1 (2)	9 (14)	33 (52)	14 (22)	6 (10)	63 (100)

As well as perspectives on gender, Table 8.2 below provides an insight on teacher attitudes towards religions.

Table 8.2 Teacher expectations: South Asian religions

Teachers On South Asian Religions	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
We Should Respect All Religions For Their Intrinsic Values	37 (57)	24 (37)	3 (5)	1 (2)	-	65 (100)
Islam Is A Particularly Dogmatic Religion	6 (9)	14 (22)	20 (31)	18 (28)	6 (9)	64 (100)
The Domestic Situation Of All Asians Is Problematic For Effective Schooling	2 (3)	3 (5)	15 (23)	30 (47)	14 (22)	64 (100)
Sikh And Hindu Groups Are Less Demanding Than Muslims	1 (2)	12 (19)	29 (47)	17 (27)	3 (5)	62 (100)
Muslim Pupils Are Far More Likely To Be Religious Than Sikhs	1 (2)	8 (12)	29 (45)	18 (28)	9 (14)	65 (100)
Pupil Religion And Culture Ought To Be Left At Home	1 (2)	6 (9)	5 (8)	38 (60)	14 (22)	64 (100)
Muslim Pupils/Students Are More Confused About Their Identity	-	6 (10)	36 (58)	13 (21)	7 (11)	62 (100)

The above table shows that teachers were considerate of all religions. The aims of the statements were to determine whether teachers regarded pupils as separate religious entities or whether teachers had been affected by the recent ‘demonisation’ of Muslim

groups. To all the other statements, the sampled teachers largely disagreed that other religious differences between South Asians affected their education and for the most part tended to provide neutral views about all religious groups. It would seem that teachers remained largely reluctant about labelling one religious group more or less academically able than another. The table shows that many teachers were positive advocates of the different faiths. Nonetheless, for teachers the association of religion with culture had distorted the image of Islam. That is, it is interesting to observe the relatively high level of agreement with the notion that there was something intrinsically 'fundamentalist' about the religion of Islam or, certainly, in the way in which it was practised by British South Asian Muslims. Nevertheless, the more fervent views of teachers were generally to suggest that all religions carried importance for those individuals practicing it and, as such, both religion and pupil ought to be given the respect they deserved.

Table 8.3 below shows the attitudinal responses of teachers towards questions of performance differences between South Asians based on religion. It is seen that teachers established predominantly an unbiased view of pupils based on ethnicity and religion. Indeed, teachers may well have adopted such a balanced perspective because they were unsure of how to respond to polarised views. The responses to the statements provided show that teachers did not wish to look at the experiences of one South Asian group differently to that of another. The table below shows that teachers largely presented the view that ethnicity did not matter in the educational achievement of individuals *or* groups; rather it was more a factor of teacher enthusiasm and how well schools were equipped. Sixty-eight per cent of teachers agreed with the notion that 'ultimate performance is not a factor of ethnicity, but of the ability of the school/college and its teachers'.

Table 8.3 Teacher expectations: South Asian academic achievement

Teachers On South Asian Performance By Ethnicity	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
Ultimate Performance Is Not A Factor Of Ethnicity, But Of The Ability Of The School/College And Its Teachers	19 (30)	25 (38)	12 (18)	8 (12)	1 (2)	65 (100)
Muslim Children Perform Least Of All	2 (3)	1 (2)	39 (63)	14 (23)	6 (10)	62 (100)
Sikh Children Perform Less Well Than Hindu	1 (2)	2 (3)	44 (72)	9 (15)	5 (8)	61 (100)
Bangladeshis Perform Less Than Pakistanis	-	5 (8)	43 (69)	11 (18)	3 (5)	62 (100)
Indian Children Perform Best Of All	-	5 (9)	40 (69)	10 (17)	3 (5)	58 (100)
Hindu Children Perform Best Of All	-	4 (7)	45 (74)	9 (15)	3 (5)	61 (100)

8.3 Socialisation and language differences between South Asian groups

An important area of study is the extent to which differences in the economic, social, political and religio-cultural domains of South Asian groups manifest themselves in educational settings. The area of focus here primarily is on issues of socialisation, intra-group tensions and language use.

When pupils first start in secondary school, there are limited opportunities for ethnic minority groups to cluster together along relational lines. It is during later school years that group characteristics begin to take shape and pupils of similar backgrounds and interests come together. Such group formations rest also on extra-curricula activities, with which pupils do or do not play a part (especially South Asian females). It was argued by teachers that in a number of cases, some South Asian parents refrained from letting their daughters accompany their white friends to outside-of-school activities. A senior teacher [16] from Rosebud School said,

Yeah... Because they get round in groups and its quite obvious, yes I think that's something a lot of people have noticed. I noticed in the sixth form because I see them socialise in the common room, but they do tend to sit around in groups. They do tend to move round the campus in groups but then I suppose they are easily identifiable like that and they do have friends from other ethnic backgrounds. I think some of it depends on how restrictions operate on mixing out of school, I have come across that with a girl in the sixth

form where there has been a problem if they do have friends from other backgrounds but they are not allowed to go out into town with them on a Saturday afternoon so they tend to be excluded from their social group so I guess they tend therefore to group with their own.

At Psi Grove School, however, it was claimed that South Asian boys mixed easily with other pupils irrespective of ethnicity. Group clustering tended not to be a significant feature along ethnic lines as the boys were found to socialise in mixed ethnicity settings. The lack of a simple pattern led a senior Indian teacher [14] to suggest variability as the norm. The difference here between boys and girls, it was argued, arise out of the different cultural expectations of South Asian boys in relation to girls. He stated,

It varies a lot actually, you'll find that one year the Asian tend to stay together in groups, other years you find that they mix quite well. The classrooms with the sixth form there are small groups, you do get an Asian group sitting round one table in my physics class but it doesn't mean they don't mix with the others, they get on quite well with the others. It's a friend thing more than anything but, you do get groups sometimes they say this is what I am going to do, this is where I am going to stay and there is a slight difference.

In the social spaces at St Margaret's College, it was felt South Asians students were segregated from the majority white students. The reason for this largely stemmed from the way in which the college is physically shaped, such that separate spaces are identifiable and therefore easily monopolised by different ethnic minority and white groups regarding the territory as their own exclusive social domains.

The vice principal [21] of St Margaret's College elaborated on the general gender and ethnicity differences between students at the college, but was confident to point out that in class, however, South Asian students mixed well with others. He said,

Right sure. I think student socialisation is not perfect. What do I mean by perfect? Its quite good within classes, in a way, it's a bit of my liberal view on that. I mean for starters, in A level Chemistry, the girls sit on one side and the boys on the other side, I am trying and laughing at that, I thought we'd moved on from the 1990s [laughs] so if I can't even get the genders to mix then... But, it is a great joy in Chemistry that I see on a table white students and ethnic

minority students and a mix of genders, I only see it occasionally. Outside the classrooms, we have not got a social mixing of the sort that in an ideal world you would like – so we have two canteens and I hate it but one tends to be a white canteen and one tends to be a black canteen.

A St Margaret's College lecturer [20] felt that there were educational as well as social complexities with some of the Muslim students. The respondent below commented on some of the genuine student dilemmas faced in the college. He felt that 'problems' with the South Asian Muslims tended not revolve around scholastic performance but were more a function of social divisions. He said,

Its been known for quite some time that its the Bangladeshi community that don't tend to do so well and the other thing I think I have reasonable grounds for saying is that we do tend to perhaps think more nowadays that the Pakistan or Muslim community, we are having slightly more problems with those now, not necessarily academically but more from the social side of college.

In further discussion of the differing social relations between South Asians, the vice principal [21] of St Margaret's College talked about an incident at the college involving different South Asian groups. The comment below provides an insight into the dynamics of social relationships between students, based here on religion and sexuality. He stated,

At the moment, we do have a very strong Islamic Society in the college – I would think that's right. I think it is a learning process that I am going through for somebody like myself who has decided to reject most of the tenets of any religion. I am still learning how important this is but then its where we're dealing with quite a difficult situation at the moment whereby a Sikh student having been taunted by a Muslim student over two or three weeks for being gay then made a statement which was defamatory about the Qur'an. It has lead to activities outside the college as well as within and those are difficult situations to deal with particularly to deal with well and to deal with in ways that show that we respect everybody.

Looking at other areas of difference between South Asian groups, teachers often suggested that a lack of proficiency in the use of English by some South Asian Muslim

groups added to their limited educational advancements. Teachers believed difficulties with use of the English language hindered the educational progress of some South Asian pupils. They believed it came into being because children tended to converse in their own South Asian languages and dialects at home or that parents did not speak English adequately with their parents.

The head [13] of Omega High School talked about the method of selection for her independent school and referred to certain remarks made by teachers concerning language that were in fact considered positive indicators of potential pupil progress,

I sit with my head of maths and head of English who are the two people who spend a fortnight of their time going through every script and I hear the discussions that take place and the only discussions that you could pick up on is where we have a reference from the school that will make a comment about language. Now the nature of the selection is such that the girls we are looking at are fluent in English, full stop. Sometimes there will be a reference from the primary school saying another language is spoken at home but I mean that is actually discussed in favour of the girl in that if she were a border line girl for a place here and we knew that English was not her first language if say her English mark was slightly lower than her maths mark the discussion would go somewhere along the lines of, "well that's not surprising is it, I'm sure we can work on that provided that rest is very strong". So, I think any comments that could be attributed to race actually operate positively, but that's my perception as a white person in a white culture.

Teachers from the selective schools were sure that language problems were not confined to South Asians. It was argued that deficient use of English was reflective of *all* impoverished groups in society, regardless of ethnicity. The first comment below is from a white teacher at Rosebud School and the second from a senior teacher at Psi Grove School. Both schools here are selective,

[16] I find talking anecdotally, I am aware of some children coming in the first years... because I teach history in the first years as well. The language is a problem although that's not exclusively true of Asians, its true for white children... because the selection tests are based on numeracy skills by and large rather than literacy skills.

[14] The school tries; we do have help from outside the school to help kids who have problems with language, etc. I think that applies to whether you are an English kid or an Asian kid, there are English kids whose spelling or written work is pretty poor so they get help just as much as an Asian kid would.

In the comprehensive schools, language issues were considered *a priori* in the educational underachievement of South Asians. An inner city schoolteacher [3] argued that the reason why South Asian pupils possessed reduced proficiencies in the use of English was because it was not practised within the home to required levels. She said, 'a lot of the children don't speak any English at home, they've got satellite TV but they are watching Asian channels and listening to Urdu or Bengali at home'.

Apart from factors within the home, the deputy head of Longlake School [11] felt that it was important for primary schools to work harder to ensure South Asian that pupils on leaving developed satisfactory levels of Mathematics and English, equipping them with the vital tools necessary for an effective secondary schooling. The comment indicates the extent to which a limited exposure to literature exposed further disadvantage for certain South Asian pupils. He said,

There are a significant proportion whose reading age is below their chronological age so again the modal value for reading age is still around nine and if anything its continued to drop a little bit which is quite disappointing really because the context of the amount of effort that's going into reading and literacy in primary school would suggest that it ought to be improving but its still rocking along the bottom.

The deputy head [12] of New Heath School, moreover, was certain that language issues were central to any potential problems faced in school by South Asian, invariably Bangladeshi and Pakistani, pupils. A lack of fluency was considered more of a predicament than limited use of the English language. He said,

I would talk about fluency here which is still a big problem, which still holds back many of our pupils. Fluency – is something that we are constantly working on – to break down those barriers but it is very difficult. I would say that still

ninety per cent plus of our pupils are now speaking English at home, so its not so much the understanding, its the fluency of expression and when we are compared to other schools we are compared to like schools by free school dinners and EAL (English as an Additional Language), but maybe free school dinners, so that's the way we are compared to other schools. But fluency of expression which I think is probably one of the most important factors doesn't come into it and so when we benchmark for the government we simply benchmark up free school dinners and that doesn't really compare us, we come right in the top 5 per cent of schools who are like us on FSD (Free School Dinners) but fluency of expression, fluency of English is a problem and its something that we are aware of, all staff are aware of and people are constantly trying to look at strategies of improving. If you walk around the school now you will see somewhere various English expressions posted up on walls and in classrooms, I think the last one was 'r' in February, so there's always something going on to assist those language difficulties. But yes, it's a major factor.

Recent large-scale research from the USA (Portes and MacLeod, 1996; 1999) and the Netherlands (Wolbers and Driessen, 1996) has identified language use at home to be eminently important for the educational achievement of ethnic minority groups. In Britain, based on a recent study of Bangladeshi mothers and their children in local primary schools it was found that they experienced difficulties in being able to talk to teachers. It was not because of a narrow vision of their children's education or teachers but because they did not feel confident in their use of the English language and it hindered potential relations (Blackledge, 1999). It seems, therefore, for ethnic minority groups the question of language use is significant and one that is also found in other advanced western economies.

In this study, one of the main ways in which South Asians differed, given the social class of respondents and the type of school, is in the way in which groups had managed to acquire the necessary language skills and whether parents had the necessary resources within the home to encourage younger South Asians through education effectively. Most inner city schoolteachers argued that they had understood the double disadvantage that certain pupils, invariably South Asian Muslims, were bringing with them to schools and over time and had attempted to alleviate deficiencies through

proactive measures. Arguably, aspects of the culture of South Asian Muslim groups which gives weight to patriarchal tendencies surfaced in boys proceeding through further education and sixth form. As the children developed from early to late stages of secondary schooling, forming groups along ethnic lines had become the norm for certain South Asian school pupils and college students.

Undeniably, for teachers, many of the apparent dilemmas faced were thought to emanate from Muslim groups whereas other non-Muslim South Asians were considered less distinguished as ethnic minority groups and behaved and acted more in line with white norms and values in education.

8.4 Teacher ethnicity and antiracist multicultural education policy

A wider analysis of the part that teachers play in the education of South Asians follows. First, it is important to elaborate upon the ethnic identity of the teacher to determine how the sampled teachers viewed other teachers in the profession from ethnic minority groups. Second, teacher expectations of South Asian pupils are evaluated demonstrating the ways in which teachers affect children. Finally, the ethos of the school is scrutinised assessing the ways in which antiracist multicultural education policies were being implemented and to what precise effect.

It is important to remain aware that in the attitudinal survey, the vast majority of teachers were white in origin (85 per cent, 93 per cent including white-other). Much research evidence exists to show the extent to which South Asians apply disproportionately less for teacher training degrees compared to their white counterparts (Modood, 1993). Other research has found ethnic minority teachers have been significantly underrepresented in mostly white schools (Ranger, 1988). It has also been recognised that some second generation South Asian teachers experience overt racism

from pupils and parents in all-white schools and prefer to work in inner city comprehensive schools that contain more ethnic minority groups (Ghuman, 1995). This research asked teachers to what extent the ethnicity of the teacher mattered given the high proportions of pupils and students from South Asian groups found in some schools and colleges.

At the time of the study, a number of South Asian and ethnic minority teachers were visible in New Heath, Longlake and St Aiden's schools. The deputy head [11] of Longlake School maintained, until recently, teachers from the ethnic minorities were not applying to the school. He felt that over time, however, the trend was in the process of reversing. He said,

The reality is that as more people get trained, the opportunity to appoint teachers from an ethnic background, that's appropriate to the needs of our kids, becomes more the case and we do have more teachers from South Asian background teaching in school now, in a wide range of roles, from science teachers through to obviously people teaching Urdu. We also have different teachers in maths, English, a whole range of curriculum areas now so things are beginning to move forward there as well.

An Indian teacher [14], nonetheless, from Psi Grove School deemed that it was misguided targeting ethnic minority groups to fill teaching posts, the merit of the individual was considered more important. Almost all the teachers from the selective schools echoed this particular sentiment. It was based on the notion that in effective schools, effective teachers were more important irrespective of the ethnic make-up of the school or as part of policy to produce role models for otherwise disadvantaged South Asian groups in the school. He said,

People will say that having an Asian teacher is a very good role model for Asian kids here. And maybe we should have a teacher from the West Indian community as well but I think you should only appoint an individual if they are good enough to cope with this kind of atmosphere, teaching environment. You shouldn't just appoint someone because of their colour and I am a firm believer in that, but I believe in equal opportunities, etc. But, it shouldn't just be well we

are lacking an Asian because the percentage is slightly low in terms of pupil-teacher ratio, that shouldn't be the case because I think it does back fire on the individual as well. If they can't teach in this kind of environment they'll find it very difficult.

Problems encountered in attempting to recruit from the ethnic minorities were further emphasised by the head [13] of Omega High School. The respondent believed that perhaps out of a fear of teaching in the independent sector or because they did not think that they stood any chance of appointment success, ethnic minorities were reluctant to make applications. She said,

One must assume that if nobody is applying they must be deterred. Now why are they deterred, there must be difficulty in that I think a lot of men are to an extent put off from applying to an all girls school, full stop... so that's a whole section cut out and perhaps one could argue that in the South Asian community... so you're left with a smaller group in any case. I have interviewed South Asians that have got to that level, they weren't as good as the white women that I saw... probably weren't as good on paper and didn't... [Hesitation]... Certainly, the applications are not there... that makes a difference.

A second area where teacher roles were in question is in their expectations of ethnic minority pupils (cf. Brittan 1976; Hurrell, 1995). The issues here exist more in the sometimes hidden assumptions and unwitting actions of teachers rather than in direct face-to-face racism. One place where it was manifest is in the selection of 13-plus subject choices (cf. Wright, 1986; Gillborn, 1990; Troyna, 1991).

The teachers from the inner city comprehensive schools, where the preponderance of pupils are Bangladeshi and Pakistani South Asian Muslims argued that if 'unwittingly racist' teachers were to apply for posts and be selected, they would find teaching an overly demanding experience in such a climate. A senior male teacher [1] from an inner city comprehensive school added,

['Racist' teachers] tends to happen less in schools like this because the staff tend to be more educated in terms of the area, the needs, the cultural

background, they happen to be more understanding. I think it happens more in the typical white-middle class school.

Similarly, some schools had progressed in their rationalisation of the potential effect of negative expectations on the part of would-be new teachers. The stance of the deputy head [11] of Longlake School was characteristic of many senior teachers. He argued,

I think we've now got a body of staff now who really do understand... I mean the lives that most of our children live are still a long way removed from the experiences of most of the staff, other than those who come from... well even some of those who come from the South Asian background... because often teachers of a South Asian background come from a very different socio-economic group to our kids. But I think we've got no teachers left for whom it's a completely alien concept and the understanding is most of the staff here or joining us take on board fairly quickly the understanding they need to understand where the kids are coming from.

The above position was expressively re-affirmed by the deputy head [12] of New Heath School. He reasoned that in a vibrant school, which was progressive in its approach towards ethnic minority groups, a positive outlook on the part of the teacher facilitated an active learning environment that remained encouraging for teachers, parents and pupils. He said,

You go into some schools and you will hear people talking about 'teachers expectations', expecting people to do well, well the expectations of teachers here are natural now, they are high. The culture of this school is that we expect the pupils to do well, That's the culture of the school. No I think that's the big difference between this school and lots of other schools where they will say they expect pupils to do well and they are working towards it but this school has been working towards it for a long time now and I think its part of the culture here. It is expected that the kids will do well, it is expected and that's the way the teachers deliver, they demand high standards of achievement, high standards of discipline but at the same time the whole system here revolves around mutual self respect, the kids respected, they respect the teachers, its not a prison they've got lots of freedom here... but they are expected to do well.

An evolving view from teachers was that as teacher performance becomes increasingly measured in output terms, it is in the interests of the teacher to ensure success for all, as

it impinges on the achievements of the many.¹ The vice principal [21] of St Margaret’s College put the point thus,

Yeah, I hope teachers don’t have closed minds but in any community there will be bigots. I think that we question, we hope to understand, and I think those are honourable reasons. Cynical reasons, we want a job and if we treated relationships between students in unsympathetic unfeeling clod-hopping way, then the atmosphere in the college would go down, that quickly gets around, applications would drop, and we’d lose our jobs. Now that is a very cynical view but it is the self-preservation view.

Table 8.4 below shows the views of teachers in relation to attitudinal statements regarding their roles as teachers in a multicultural environment, based on day-to-day educational management issues that arise from working with differentiated ethnic minority groups.

Table 8.4 Teacher expectations: policies towards South Asians

Teacher Views On Teacher Ethnicity	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
The School/College Tries To Encourage The Understanding Of All Cultures And Religions	35 (52)	29 (43)	1 (2)	2 [3]	-	67 (100)
It Is Always Important To Help Disadvantaged Groups In Education	20 (31)	39 (61)	5 (8)	-	-	64 (100)
Reducing Inequalities Of Achievement Is A Significant Policy Of The School/College	20 (30)	32 (48)	7 (10)	6 (9)	-	67 (100)
I Believe That Matters Of 'Race' In School Are Most Important In A Pluralist Society	18 (28)	27 (42)	13 (20)	5 (8)	1 (2)	64 (100)
More Asian Teachers In Schools Would Help To Motivate Pupils More	5 (8)	19 (29)	25 (38)	15 (23)	2 (3)	66 (100)
Problems Of Inequality Are To Do With Pupils And Parents Rather Than Teachers	5 (8)	14 (22)	22 (34)	21 (33)	2 (3)	64 (100)

The above table reveals that the attitudes of teachers were developmental rather than in

¹ Recent moves by central government have emerged to introduce policies remunerating teachers based on performance outputs. Policy based on improved achievements of pupils in all age groups, specifically those relating to GCSE and A level outputs, would ultimately result in positive increments to teachers pay (DfEE, 1998).

any way tentative or unresolved towards South Asians. It may have resulted out of a desire to respond defensibly in relation to ethnic minorities and education. The responses, nonetheless, seem to suggest that teachers were cognisant of the economic, social and ethnic differences between the various South Asian groups and aware of the need to positively improve the lot of otherwise impoverished groups.

Given that some of the schools in this study contained high numbers of South Asian Muslims, it invariably gave rise to certain demands from groups based on religion. All of the teachers informed that they were responsive to pupil religions and certain aspects of their cultures. As an example, Psi Grove School held an annual cultural event. A senior male teacher [14] from Psi Grove School stated,

We have a festival of cultures here which tries to unite cultures from all over the world, I think its an excellent idea and the way children interact, the way you have English or West Indian kids going for Asian music, Bhangra, etc its excellent and they do actually participate. There isn't anything negative about it, them saying oh I have been thrown in here, they will do that happily.

The deputy head [12] of New Heath School remained positive about the general approach taken by the school and confirmed the effect it was having on pupils. It was stated teachers at New Heath School were thought to be informed and respectful of all the religions and pupils, as a result, responded positively. Staff numbers also reflected the diversity of pupils. He said,

I think probably asking our parents here is the indicator if we are able to help in that area but we are very very respectful of the religion of our pupils. And I would say that fortunately our staff body who are also knowledgeable and we do appreciate the situation and yes we do close for Eid... we do tend to plan our teacher training days around Eid, we do allow our teacher colleagues of whatever culture or religion to have their festivals away from us, whether it be a Sikh, Jewish or Muslim festival we will respect that and give colleagues time to be with their families and its a natural part of the school. We know that Eid's on Saturday and we have planned at least half our children possibly won't be with us tomorrow, possibly, and teachers are prepared for that, the more we get in the better but I think the pupils feel comfortable with that right down to instruction within sex education, personal and social education. There is always

a deep respect for religion and culture within the school and I think the pupils and the parents respect that very much and although we haven't got a huge majority of staff who aren't from this country we do have a reasonable diversity of staff with us – and staff who have travelled widely and brought with them to the school that level of knowledge of other people and other cultures which is somewhat possibly lacking in this country generally speaking. So, I think we are quite lucky in that respect. In assemblies and tutorials you will always get an appreciation of other religions and cultures...

Table 8.5 below shows the views of teachers towards wider issues relating to ethnic minority groups within schools. It highlights the outlook that South Asians need to be considered in schools not as potential difficult areas but as individuals with needs and aspirations that ought to be met through an evolving system of education. Extraordinarily, seventy-seven per cent of respondents agreed to the notion that ‘it is important that we recruit more ethnic minorities into the profession’. It somewhat contrasts the views expressed earlier emphasising the importance of teacher competence over their ethnicity.

Table 8.5 Teacher expectations: the future

Teacher Expectations Of The Future	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)	Total (%)
We Have To Work Hard To Ensure That Inequalities In Education Do Not Remain In The Future	25 (40)	35 (56)	3 (5)	-	-	63 (100)
It Is Important That We Recruit More Ethnic Minorities Into The Profession	10 (15)	40 (62)	9 (14)	6 (9)	-	65 (100)
I Think Asian Children Are Increasingly Going To Be A Problem For Schools To Deal With	-	3 (5)	14 (22)	32 (49)	16 (25)	65 (100)
As The Number Of Asians Increase In School, So Will Our Problems	-	1 (2)	19 (29)	30 (45)	16 (24)	66 (100)

The impressions gained from responses to the statements in the table above suggest that teachers felt it was important to be cognisant of the difficulties facing South Asians in school, in society and in general, and how schooling can ameliorate

positively. Indeed, the overwhelming majority, ninety-six per cent of teachers, agreed to the sentiment, 'we have to work hard to ensure that inequalities in education do not remain in the future'.

Therefore, a number of interesting findings have emerged from the evaluation of teacher perspectives. The types of responses teachers provided were largely positive and related to a perception of South Asian pupils as economically, socially and ethnically diverse groups. The view of teachers towards ethnic minority and South Asian pupils had developed favourably in these schools, as *stated* by the teachers. It is also apparent that teachers made it known that they truly empathised with the realities of pupils and the cultural and social 'baggage' that they took with them to school.

8.5 An evolving system of education

The current structure of the education system is affected by the characteristics of national curriculum, testing at all ages, league tables and performance indices. The head [2] of an inner city school comprehensive expressed it succinctly, 'if the national curriculum says that you have to have English history then you have to do English history... end of story'.

An African-Caribbean head [7] felt that the national curriculum necessarily maintained a Eurocentric bias, which required development in the pursuit of a more effective antiracist multicultural education policy. It was believed that there were parts of the curriculum that continued to celebrate the past imperiousness of the British and, as such, remained outmoded. This progressive head took it upon himself to place into the school timetable aspects of a wider history and world view, incorporating the successes and achievements of otherwise unrecognised ethnic minorities. He said,

The actual planned curriculum, even though the National Curriculum dictates what we teach, we have to find ways of penetrating that to make sure that it's not purely Eurocentric and that we contextualise whatever it is – European, in with other third world contributions, in almost any discipline, whether it's maths, science, history, geography, whatever it is. We can find the leadership to parallel anything that white Europe can come up with and we want all our youngsters to be proud of that and to see that they are worth.

A female teacher [3] from an inner city comprehensive school reiterated the idea that a curriculum existed largely to follow a narrowly defined line of content. She alluded to the bias and sometimes what appeared to be omissions in the curriculum. Often, content concentrated on Britain's past and did not reflect the diverse multicultural history or the experiences and present day realities of ethnic minority groups. The use or non-use of certain literature was an example highlighted. She said,

I think that the curriculum is *not* particularly unbiased. If you look at history what do they study. A lot is taken from the European perspective not from other countries. You only see the white side really – in the books that are used in Britain. You are not seeing the slaves' perspective of black history or whatever. The history that I suppose that taught us even India in this country, it was the English perspective, not the other side of people going in and taking over. I think that a lot of curriculum has hidden racism. You in England, the literature you look at is Shakespeare, you look at the Brunets, you look at Jane Austin, you are looking at all these traditional great English writers and you're not representing great writers from other cultures.

The limitations faced by South Asian pupils are built into an education system that has become increasingly centralised. Pupils and students select subjects within constraints. Examinations taken by pupils and students are also another example of transformation taking place in the education system. The General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' (GCE O level) and Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) systems amalgamated to form the single GCSE system, while traditional A level examinations have been increasingly replaced by modular testing. Moreover, vocational qualifications and alternative routes into higher education have been established through schemes such as the GNVQ and the development of access courses. Teachers also reported that although

more South Asian school pupils and college students obtained A-C passes at A level, the higher grades were as difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, pupils and students tended to regard such alternative qualifications less positively. There was evidently a fixation with GCSEs and A levels. An inner city head [9] articulated that, 'vocational qualifications are still seen as the "bronze standard" '.

A science teacher [20] from St Margaret's College talked about the changing system of education. He believed that a change to modular A levels had invariably helped some of the students to obtain improved grades. He said,

Many more subjects are now modular and that does seem to give the weaker students more of a chance because they can re-take and it also gives them more of an incentive because if they realise they are nearer to a particular grade they can then sort of maybe work that little bit harder whereas if the exams are all at the end of the two years they don't know how they will do it. So we think the modular exams have helped.

Another senior lecturer [23] from St Margaret's College noted how the combination of coursework and modular examinations had helped to improve college educational performance figures. However, it was also argued that too great a dependence on the modular approach may well lead to new problems. She said,

I don't know really, the course work, e.g., that we have has definitely benefited students and now the modal grade is B for that (sociology A level). Its difficult to talk about other subjects isn't it, most subjects now have either course work or modular. About a third of the subjects here are modular and most of those have good exam results but that's partly because the people involved in teaching here are not only very dedicated in coming during half term... but also they are quite involved in examining so they have a really good idea about what goes on. And, I think if the college as a whole went modular I'm not sure whether that would work because students juggle their commitments. We were talking about that just before you came, that they do maybe two A levels at the time in rotation and they've got short term modular deadlines, that's fine but if they were doing modular in all their subjects it would be much harder. So I think its very difficult to say but there's not so much of the traditional three hour paper at the end of the two years so I think that is better for students and... we have one three hour paper which is causing students some difficulties.

It also found that teachers believed that by the South Asian pupils taking additional GCSE subjects in one or modern languages, the results of the school necessarily improved. The head [9] of an inner city comprehensive school put it thus,

One of the things we find, we celebrate is the fact that we've probably got in mother tongue languages, tremendously high levels of achievements, in Urdu and Bengali, and that has an impact on children because it gives them confidence in terms of examination performance but it also gives them qualifications, which they receive.

The above claim was further echoed by two white senior teachers from two other inner city comprehensive schools. The statement by the second teacher, however, evokes another important question. That is, how far does the school use the will and determination of South Asian pupils to succeed in alternative GCSE subjects as a justification for not achieving in the more mainstream subjects. It was said,

[2] Our success at Urdu over the last few years has been tremendous... It's actually kept the C grades of the school buoyant. Without so many Urdu passes, ABC school's results would be probably three to four per cent worse overall.

[9] We've got eleven per cent A-Cs but a lot of those are Urdu, Punjabi or Bengali. We're kidding ourselves if those cloud the issues of why kids aren't performing in the same level as other subjects.

Teachers interviewed and surveyed for the study, overall, claimed that they had unambiguously developed positive ways in which schools related to parents and helped to achieve GCSE success for pupils. Schools and senior teachers working in deprived inner city areas were mindful of the different social, cultural and religious origins of South Asian pupils. Improved management with greater teacher aspirations, expectations and motivations increased the educational achievements and opportunities for South Asians. Teachers considered their methods as a move away from "talk and chalk" approaches to more progressive teaching models.

It is indisputable, however, that institutional racism persists in education, particularly in the form of the high exclusion rates for African-Caribbeans and the effect of the tiered GCSE examination system, which results in discouraging those placed in lower examination sets to pursue the higher grades (cf. Gillborn *et al.*, 1999). Over the last decade, although GCSE and A level results have improved for all, it is also apparent that the increase in performance has been significantly lower for various ethnic minority groups (Gillborn and Mirza, 2000). Indeed, to improve the educational achievements of South Asian groups, a 'school pedagogy focusing on interaction and intervention' is argued by teachers (cf. Wrigley, 1997).

8.6 Discussion

From the implementation of the ERA in 1988, the changing nature of the educational system has led to an increased marketisation of schools and, at present, the legacy of 14-19 education is in the hands of a new Labour administration set to remain in power for at least two terms (Gillborn, 1997b; Hatcher, 1997; Young and Spours, 1998). Changes to the education system over the last decade or so, however, have largely ignored ethnic minority groups in the processes of developing policy (Gillborn, 1997a; Tomlinson, 1998). Quality schools have become stronger and weaker schools either have been closed down or have been forced to improve in order to survive. At the time of writing, national GCSE results have improved for the eighteenth successive year. The aspiration to obtain educational success has led to greater efforts being made on the part of *all* pupils, students, parents and teachers alike. Although, ethnic minority groups have also been improving their achievements and currently are the highest that they have ever been, the polarity between successful and unsuccessful ethnic minority groups is wider than ever. Nationally, on average, the improvement of ethnic minority performance has

been significantly less well than improvements for the indigenous whites (Gillborn and Gipps, 1996; Gillborn and Mirza, 2000).

Teachers from both the selective and comprehensive schools were aware that there were gender as well as religious differences between the various South Asian groups in education. Religious societies in school were given some independence and the schools and colleges were sensitive to the demands placed by groups on the grounds of religion. There were, however, some questions in relation to genders and religion. In one college setting, it was felt that boys were using religion as a front for expressing their masculinity at the same time as subjugating girls.

South Asian students thought to be particularly disadvantaged in education were also thought to lack a sufficient grasp of the English language and it was felt it dramatically hindered progression. Attempts made to improve home-school relations made only marginal developments. Particularly in relation to South Asian Muslim girls, there was still concern, especially from teachers in comprehensive schools, that they were being inveigled out of education after a certain age or especially restricted from participating from outside-of-school extra-curricular or social activities. It is somewhat paradoxical, and as it is evidenced in recent periods, that *all* South Asian girls are outperforming *all* South Asian boys. Behavioural differences in the classroom between boys and girls were evident, with all South Asian girls found to be hard working and devoted to their education and some boys behaving irrationally and disrespecting teachers, much to their misfortune in education.

In exploring the effect of teacher ethnicity, many of the teachers interviewed were sceptical of the notion of recruiting on the grounds of ethnicity. In the selective schools, it was felt that meritocracy was more important than ethnicity. The alternative point of view was that applications from ethnic minority groups were not forthcoming.

In the comprehensive schools, it was found that increasingly ethnic minority teachers were visible in schools and it was believed that, at a general level, it provided some positive advantage for South Asian pupils. 'Racist teachers', it was argued, would not work in inner city schools because they would find it difficult to operate in such an environment.

In an increasingly competitive educational atmosphere, examination results matter more than ever with schools encouraged to increase the performance of all pupils, irrespective of ethnicity. However, it is also clear from analyses of secondary data that although the educational achievements of all groups have improved, ethnic minority groups have bettered, on average, less well. In addition, for some teachers in the comprehensive schools, the curriculum, in spite of everything, was still believed to be biased and contained too great a Eurocentric tone. It was felt that this situation ought to be improved.

On the whole, economic and social marginalisation of South Asian Muslim groups has resulted in a similarly inadequate experience of education. The selective schools and the effective comprehensive schools encouraged the high performances of all pupils, but some schools were weakened by the presence of many from disadvantaged backgrounds. It placed extra pressures and strains on teachers and the resources of the school.

All these variances have the effect of providing, for example, Indians (Hindu and Sikh) advantaged positions in education and subsequently in society. The converse is true for South Asian Muslims (Bangladeshis and Pakistanis). The future of South Asians in education will remain divided along these lines, as the inequalities in society between 'rich' and 'poor' widen, with some ethnic minority groups remaining trapped in economic and social exclusion. It is the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, often experiencing

marked economic and social exclusion that will find it hardest to perform well. At the same time as other South Asian groups (i.e., Indians and East African Asians) are pulling ahead and at such rapid rates.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

9.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore and analyse the ways in which different South Asian groups in different schools and colleges perform, based on the variables of social class, ethnicity, gender, religion and culture. Founded on the evaluation of research into the educational achievements of South Asian since the post war period, as well as the way in which the politics and sociology of research into 'race' and education has been determined, this study has shown why Bangladeshis, Indians and Pakistanis perform because of differences in social class, the effect of schools, religion and culture.

Antiracist educationists have argued that institutional racism permeated through the actions of teachers, wittingly or unwittingly, leads to the educational underachievement of certain South Asians. Multicultural educationists argue that an environment within the home and the educational and social class resources that South Asian parents have, provide a better explanation for underachievement. Critics of antiracism, arising from the arguments put forward by the 'methodological purists', believe that teacher racism is the least important of all factors.

In drawing conclusions, it is important to move away from current debates on methodology or the act of educational research itself, although they are valuable. Alternatively, it is essential to look towards identifying causes for differential rates of ethnic minority educational achievement based on an array of factors inside the home as well the school.

The methodological framework for the study was based on the exploration of educational experiences and perceptions of pupils, students, parents and teachers from varying educational institutions in the city of Birmingham. It is believed that based on

extensive research and empirical rigour, this study has been both broad as well as multi-layered in determining the outcomes. A summary analysis of the main empirical sections of the thesis follows: South Asian educational achievement processes; the perennial dichotomy of school versus the home in the achievements of South Asians; and an evaluation of teacher perspectives. Typographical and theoretical developments emanating from this research are also presented as well as suggestions for further research in this area.

9.2. Discussion of empirical findings

9.2.1 Life cycle processes of education

Although this study was effectively concerned with processes of education for South Asians between the ages of 14-19, it was found, nevertheless, that early schooling experiences were generally regarded positively by most South Asian pupils and college respondents, and considered an enjoyable experience by the vast majority of *all* respondents (see Chapter Four, pp. 72-4 and Tables 4.2 and 4.3, p. 74). A fuller analysis of primary schooling education was greater than the remit of this study. Nonetheless, it was found that Bangladeshi and some Pakistani children suffered from a problematical early education because of their late arrival into the education system. A few of the respondents also reported that it was difficult to adjust at first.

In the transition from primary education to secondary education, differences were found between South Asians based on social class and the effectiveness of schools. In the transition to selective schooling in particular, the social class background of parents was the most important factor, closely followed by adequate preparation for the common entrance examinations. South Asian parents from lower social class positions differed in their attitudes towards selective schooling compared to their middle-class

counterparts. Some of the poorer South Asian parents were encouraged by the idea of selective schooling but felt that they did not possess the financial means to support their children through it. The alternative view was that these schools were intended for other, more affluent, South Asians. The teachers from the sampled schools also indicated that there were high rates of South Asians sitting entrance tests, but inadequate preparation tended to affect *all* candidates as we all as South Asians.

The question of setting in schools and its effect upon pupils and students was explored. It was an attempt to gauge whether South Asians experienced negative outcomes in any way and which particular groups more so than others. It was found that children were streamed in various ways, particularly for the national curriculum core subjects and more subtly for others. Pupils from all schools provided the view that they had little choice over GCSE subjects, as there appeared to be limited flexibility in the way in which subjects could be chosen. Some South Asian pupils, particularly a number of the Muslims (Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and East African Asians), in both selective and comprehensive schools, selected additional modern language or religious studies GCSE subjects, taken both inside and outside of schools (see Chapter Five, pp. 89-94). Both school pupils and college students felt unaffected by streaming, but without always recognising the implications (see Table 5.1, p. 92). Pupils and students felt they were affected positively and directly by parent stimuli.

It was found that middle-class parents, however, were generally inclined to permit their children and the teachers from the more effective schools decide on GCSE subjects. It was less affluent South Asian parents with children in less effective schools that were more likely to take greater involvement in the subject selections made. It was normally found that the schools were important in this GCSE selection process, but, where possible, parents possessed the impetus to exert more influence and in some cases

directly influence their children's choices. The teachers from the sampled schools also agreed with the notion that South Asian parents tended to be positively involved in the selection of GCSE subjects. Based on the survey of teachers, however, it was found that some parents were thought to be somewhat narrow in the choice of their children's GCSEs and A levels (Chapter Five, pp. 99-103)

Overall, South Asian pupils from the selective schools picked subjects because of their academic orientation. In the comprehensive schools, vocational courses were taken alongside GCSE subjects. Parents stated that they had endeavoured to ensure that the educational paths taken by their children were trouble free as possible. Although it is commonly understood that South Asian parents are often strongly motivated for their children to perform well, significant differences emerged, however, with the extent of educational knowledge that parents had. Nonetheless, all parents were strongly motivated for their children, irrespective of their children's gender or religion.

The notion that South Asian Muslim Bangladeshi and Pakistani females were restricted after compulsory leaving age did not emerge significant in this study from pupils, students or parents. Some of the teachers and some college students, in particular, did highlight instances of being restricted from education. Rather, all South Asian females were encouraged by parents with an added pressure to perform rather than to be removed.

As the pupils and students progressed above GCSE level, differences were found between the experiences of pupils from selective and comprehensive schools. Reasons for performance disparity in examination results, necessarily, were directly attributable to the effect of schools. In the selective schools, pupils chose to carry on at the sixth form almost without question. The reasons provided were essentially academic in orientation. Pupils from selective schools wished to invariably enter elite universities for

higher education. There also appeared a high preference to study medicine at university, particularly from the selective school pupils. Both selective and comprehensive school pupils, and many of the college students, normally wished to go through further education and enter higher education before even contemplating the idea of work (see Chapter Six, pp. 113-22).

Invariably all the South Asian pupils and students reported that they wished to attend university at some stage. For college students, 58 per cent of the survey respondents were confident of this (see Table 6.12, p. 120). Teachers felt that the South Asian pupils and students were self-assured in selecting their educational paths and often were aiming for more elite universities given the selective statuses of some of the sampled schools. Higher motivation levels arising out of wish to be removed from economic and social exclusion led many South Asians to aim highly. There were disparities, however, between institutions and social class levels. Less likely were students to attend universities or colleges of higher education further away from home simply because of the cost to the individual. Consequently, universities nearer home were attractive to *all* would-be South Asian degree students (see Chapter Six, pp. 122-9). Table 6.13 (p. 126) demonstrated that teachers were aware of the ambitions of South Asian parents and their children, who were particularly keen to read science- or medicine-related subjects.

9.2.2 Responsibilities: parents or teachers?

It has been shown that aspects of culture, religion, socialisation and language act interdependently to make the educational life cycle of the young South Asian a multifaceted experience. Both parents and their children were convinced in their enthusiasm for educational achievement. The delineation that Hindus outperform Sikhs,

who in turn outperform Muslims (given class and type of school) is accepted and well known in quantitative terms, however, this qualitative study has shown how these groups differ and in which particular ways.

In the analysis of the question of whether it is parents or teachers that are responsible for the education of South Asians, differences were found between groups in their attitude towards relationships with the school, on the one hand, and on the other, towards the home. College students, it was found, were more critical of their white teachers and it appeared that most of the negative experiences mentioned were by South Asian Muslim respondents. Many were concerned by the lack of expectation on the part of teachers or their inability to recognise the capabilities of South Asian students in ways that were more direct. Perhaps college students were more critical of their teachers because of their reflexive outlook and increased maturity, as opposed to pupils interviewed in schools, who had further time remaining and might have been more concerned with trying not to raise attention to such predicaments.

South Asian parents presented few, if any, direct criticisms of teachers. When the question of teacher ethnicity was raised, however, middle class parents wished for effective teachers *per se*, irrespective of ethnicity. Less affluent South Asian parents were in favour of co-ethnic teachers, particularly in their ability to potentially facilitate 'Asian' problems, to which white teachers may be otherwise less sympathetic. Pupils and students responded to this question in a similar way. Co-ethnic teachers were considered useful in a situation where certain cases may arise, which could be both domestic or school-specific and not easily be recognised or ameliorated by other teachers (see Chapter Seven, pp. 130-43).

In raising the question of who is answerable for educational underachievement, middle class parents stated that they would blame their own children first. South Asian

parents from the lower social classes were more certain that the school was at fault and not their children. Interestingly, more socially mobile parents implicated other South Asian parents that were not in the fortunate position of raising their standards in the same way. These parents were more likely to directly associate members of their own ethnic minority community to their children's underachievement. They felt that many of these other parents were ill informed of the ways required to achieve in education.

Turning to the home lives of South Asian children and their parents, additional differences were recognised. All South Asian school pupils and college students alluded to the notion that being a Muslim in a western society presented complications, given the nature of the religion as well as some of the cultural practices of parents and communities (see Chapter Seven, pp. 143-58). Thus, it was found that South Asian Muslim females were not only beginning to identify strongly with their religion, in comparison with males, but they also sought to discover a 'proper' Islam rather than the somewhat inaccurate religio-cultural inculcations of parents. Muslim females tended to stress how important it was to understand Islam correctly.

The movement, in part, has led to demands by Muslim pupils and students made in *all* the sampled schools and colleges, not necessarily by the parents directly, but by the pupils and students, to form active societies and provide, for example, prayer facilities. It was found that Muslims were far more likely to have attended after-school supplementary schools, given that all pupils and students wanted more religion to be taught within schools (see Tables 7.3, p. 147). It may explain part of the reason why religion in school or college was in such high demand. It was also ascertained that there were distinct differences between parents on levels of religious adherence (see Tables 7.4 and 7.5 on p. 151). The small number of Muslim mothers interviewed reported being the most religious within the home. Perhaps the latter was indicative of the way in

which mothers are able to impart social, cultural and religious norms and values onto their children, with daughters, therefore, being able to identify more closely with Islam and potentially motherhood. Where both parents lack education or formal Islamic training, it is the responsibility of the mother to teach what knowledge she has to the children, thus providing young Muslim females with a further wish to emulate their mothers.

The time and effort needed to perform the duties of Islam, combined with the lower social class positions that these parents find themselves, ensured that pupils and students are asked more of and with less overall resources at their disposal in comparison to other South Asian groups. Moreover, parents were convinced of the values and scriptures of Islam and wished to ensure that the greatest possible depth of knowledge was communicated to their children. Conversely, more socially integrated Hindu parents were sure that their children were religious, but not to the detriment of their education. Sikh parents ranged in their attitudes towards religion in relation to the class levels they occupied. More affluent Sikh parents in the main kept their religious and cultural identities intact but their children were less bound by such religious and cultural norms (see Chapter Seven, pp. 155-8).

It was found that within the home, social class and religious differences affected South Asian groups differentially. Namely, there were more resources available for some South Asians, for example, room space for children, residence in middle-class suburbs and so on. From the college student sample, it was found that a relatively significant number of Muslims, in particular Bangladeshis, were overseas born. They mainly spoke their mother tongue with their parents. There was also a contrast between unemployed Muslim parents and Indians, both mothers and fathers, who tended to be employed full-time. It was discovered that Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents were less

helpful with their children's schoolwork than those from other South Asian origins, primarily because of their limited knowledge of the English language and the education system in general. In specifically relating to parent evenings, Bangladeshi students were more likely to report that their parents did not attend.

As such, for South Asian Muslims in Birmingham, theirs is a reaction and an adaptation to the limited opportunities faced. Parental motivations are high amongst South Asian groups that seek social mobility through the education of their children; nevertheless, underperformance is still apparent and has become the norm for certain South Asian groups. It is the marginalised occupational positions that South Asian migrants originally found themselves in, which are still reproduced for their children. Furthermore, there are disparities between parental and school expectations, fuelling disillusionment, which consequently discourages parents and pupils. Certain South Asians receive a limited education, because of the unequal structure of contemporary society and the way in which the education system has reinforced them. The privileged sustain themselves not only through their own education but also through the education of others.

It was the Indians emanating from higher socio-economic positions that were able to take greater advantage of a selective education system, thereby improving their positions. Conversely, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis living in inner city areas, entered schools where resources are limited and the infrastructures of schools do not permit the same degree of access to educational and ultimately occupational opportunity.

9.2.3 Teachers and their views evaluated

It was relatively clear that many teachers provided encouraging rejoinders to questions in relation to South Asians and education. The reason was that many of the schools were

able to apply 'progressive policies' in order to ameliorate the disadvantaged positions of certain South Asians. Teachers in inner city comprehensive schools that were more critical of South Asian pupils invariably originated from schools performing significantly lower than citywide and national averages.

In schools, teachers testified that South Asian females tended to group together, and that it was not automatically inside of classrooms. Language use was also found to be an important factor in how South Asian Muslim groups socialised. Many teachers proposed that the use of English for these groups remained inadequate and it consequently affected their performance in the classroom. There were many comments made about Muslim boys and their social behaviour. These boys were thought to have displayed an amalgamation of expressed masculinity combined with their religious-cultural norms and values. Therefore, for teachers the gender distinction became associated with a perception of Islam – which has become increasingly 'demonised' in recent periods. In both cases, it was not Islam itself which led to such erroneous assumptions, rather the way in which Islam is practised by some South Asian Muslim groups in Britain and to an extent, how worldwide events are perceived. Namely, it is organised and facilitated along the cultural lines observed in the sending regions before migration as well as the way in which wider global Islamic movements have been effectual. In a sense, young Muslims are disadvantaged because of the lower social class positions they have inherited as well as the way in which the religion of Islam has been distorted and negatively portrayed by the popular media during contemporary episodes of geopolitical history (see Tables 8.1, p. 164 and Table 8.2, p. 164).

The roles that teachers play was thought to be important in the inner city comprehensive schools because of the nature of the intake, but not in the selective schools, where it was believed that the overall ability of the teacher mattered more than

their ethnicity. The view was shared equally by pupils, parents and teachers. Senior teachers in and heads of selective schools, in particular, alluded that ethnic minority applicants were not forthcoming (see Chapter Eight, pp. 172-9 and Table 8.4, p. 176). Anecdotal evidence has shown the effect of South Asians not opting for teacher training degrees has considerably limited their availability as teachers. When they do emerge, it is also recognised that ethnic minority teachers may prefer to teach in inner city schools in order to empower children from similar backgrounds to themselves. In addition, teachers in this study believed that 'racist' teachers would not be found in inner city schools because of the demands placed upon them by ethnic minority pupils and their educational needs.

In the current climate in Birmingham, it was found that teachers were more informed and aware of the situations of South Asians and therefore far more able to provide the necessary environment for pupils. Given the highly competitive nature of school league tables, where in the past unwitting racism may well have prevailed, enlightened teachers are now far more conscious of addressing such issues. Teachers are required to perform well, resulting in being more progressive about ethnic minority groups, who in turn are achieving more in comparison to achievement rates of the past, although the difference between ethnic minority 'successes' and ethnic minority 'failures' is wider than ever.

9.3 Typographical analysis of findings

The nature of South Asian group identification with religion and culture, and the implications for educational advantage or disadvantage are explored. The changing nature of the education system and implications for ethnic minority groups are also discussed.

Hindu parents were able to provide the greatest in terms of motivational roles, primarily because of their privileged educational and occupational positions. It instilled a sense of confidence in both parents and their children, unrivalled by other South Asian groups. Nevertheless, it was found that Punjabi-Sikh parents exhibited a similar approach, proposing that the education of their children was supreme. The experiences of South Asian Muslim parents were found to be more complex however. Parents of Pakistani origin demographically dominating parts of inner city Birmingham are not equipped with the same level of educational qualifications or occupational status as Sikh or Hindu parents. As a result of discrimination and disadvantage resulting in marginalisation from mainstream society, Muslim parents are eager to uphold an Islamic and cultural tradition amongst their young. Therefore, Islamic education is considered important as well as formal school education. Inner city schools with high numbers of Muslim pupils are also places where cultural and religious norms and values are imparted to children. Part of the reason has arisen because of parents but it is also affected by the will of schools and teachers to bridge the gap between community and schooling. The situation of Bangladeshis is a variant of Pakistanis, arriving relatively later on, but with settlement in the same locations. There are further complications, since Bangladeshis tend to be even poorer and parents less educated than their Pakistani counterparts, although Bangladeshi females over the last few years have been outperforming in examination results compared with the Bangladeshi males and both the Pakistani females and males in Birmingham. Combined with these factors, the Bangladeshi community in Birmingham is also experiencing the development of an Islamic and national identity by their young.

A central hypothesis in this study asked whether the additional factors of religion and culture are able to explain the way in which the educational achievements of South

Asians differ, as well as how they bring about the processes involved. In practise, disadvantage in educational opportunity is characterised by social and cultural elements intrinsic in certain South Asian groups, given that social class and the effect of schools have been found to be principally effectual. Conversely, it is the advantaged status of certain Indian (essentially Hindu, Sikh and East African Asian) groups in society, which has allowed them to take full benefit of existing educational opportunity structures. As well as occupying higher positions in mainstream society itself, they are also able to send their children to schools that are more effective and have adopted additional strategies within the home helping Indian parents to ensure greater educational success for their children. Largely, these groups have integrated into society and have thus been able to increase their advancement.

Since the earliest stages of post war migration of ethnic minority groups, the education system has undergone many changes. There has been a steady rise in national attainments of GCSEs and A levels. It has resulted in a dramatic move in the population of students through the education system beyond the age of nineteen. In the midst of this immense sea change, inequalities have invariably persisted and intensified. Furthermore, based on the migration of other South Asians over time and the way in which communities have been socially stratified, divisions have emerged in the educational achievements of South Asians. The gulf between high and low achievers began to widen during the Thatcherite period (1979-1990) and did not relent during the 1990s.

Increasingly, central government policy has sought to provide parents with a choice of school for their children. The choice, however, is seen as a limitation for working class parents. The education system has essentially become a function of capitalism and increasingly so in recent periods of British educational history. Indeed, currently education in England is not a fair system but is riddled with inequality. The

attitudes of certain disadvantaged South Asian parents towards schools are informed by an expectation of failure, and their own negative experiences of education

It is recognised that South Asian groups tend to be located in poorer inner city areas; they are less likely to be seen as desirable commodities by teachers; and there is an increasing possibility of segregation as white parents can choose to remove their children from certain ethnic minority-specific schools. Ethnic minority social class positions are important because educational knowledge in the current market place suggests that some ethnic minority groups because of economic and social marginalisation remain uninformed. Some Bangladeshi and Pakistani parents, as a result, are distinctly disadvantaged. On the other hand, there are a small number of affluent and enlightened South Asians that are able to take advantage of the educational opportunities made available. Market forces have had the effect of segregating certain groups and alienating them from potential educational advantage.

It is important, therefore, to develop a typological framework in concluding this study, as the analysis and findings have indicated a series of important and new insights. The study has evaluated the economic and social predicaments facing South Asians in Birmingham; their cultural and religious manifestations have also been highlighted in an attempt to evaluate more fully the nature of South Asians in educational settings. Given the broad differences found between South Asian groups, this research was designed to determine the nature of divergence in educational achievement processes for successful and unsuccessful groups. The research attempted to delineate processes, recognising foremost the heterogeneity of South Asians and their schools. The way in which these processes were determined was through the mixing of in-depth interview and survey methods and the way in which the schools and colleges under study were by nature academically divergent. A research project of this size and complexity, incorporating the

wider variables of ethnicity, class, gender, religion and culture into a study of differentiated South Asian groups in education, using a distinctive qualitative methodological framework is unique.

Table 9.1 below attempts to identify a typological framework for understanding how South Asians perform in education. The table highlights the nature of differences, largely because of characteristics attributable to South Asian groups and the type of educational institution that pupils attend. As such, the table is an index of the factors of performance for different types of South Asian groups in different educational settings.

Table 9.1 A typological framework for South Asians in education

Process Variables	Comprehensive Educational Institutions	Selective Educational Institutions
South Asian Type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lower Social Class Positions ▪ Bangladeshis And Pakistanis (Muslims) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Social Class Positions ▪ Indians (Hindus And Sikhs)
Parents And The Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Low Occupational Position ▪ Low Housing Quality ▪ Low English Language Use ▪ Low Parent Education Attainments ▪ Detached Participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Occupational Position ▪ High Housing Quality ▪ High Command Of English ▪ High Parent Education Attainments ▪ Involved Participation
Teachers And The School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Antiracist Multicultural Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Antiracist Multicultural Policy
Gender: Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Subjugated And Dependent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Independent And Free Willed
Gender: Achievement Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls Achieve Better Than Boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Girls Achieve Better Than Boys
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bi-Lingualism (Based On Mother Tongue Teaching Assistance) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mono-Lingualism (English Is The Most Important Language)
Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-Religious Orientation ▪ Hijab Plus Uniform Worn By Girls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-Religious Orientation ▪ Hijab Plus Uniform Worn By Girls
Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Local And Former Polytechnics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National And 'Traditional' Universities

In reality, the determination to achieve in education is eminently affected by the will of parents. It is also apparent, however, that variable knowledge on the part of parents exists on the way in which achievement is best acquired. Middle class South Asian parents acquire ‘hot knowledge’ to help develop become more informed of educational

opportunities through social networks and contacts, rather than from the information provided by the schools themselves, particularly in relation to the choice of secondary schooling.

Parent education levels are also significant, as they are associated closely with the educational successes of their children, particularly into higher education. It proposes that mere social class is not the only factor and that the education of parents is also important. It is Bangladeshis and Pakistanis, nevertheless, that enter local primary and comprehensive schools that tend to be located in the inner cities of Birmingham. These schools have a propensity to be under-resourced with the teaching of limited quality and lower examination results. Other South Asians that are more fortunate live in the outer cities or in suburban areas, have greater economic capital at their disposal and attend schools that are more effective (or selective schools in inner city areas). Although parents are just as highly motivated, they also tend to be more informed.

The experience of South Asian Muslim females, however, remains interesting. Recent research continues to find the group to be more successful in education compared to their male counterparts, largely through the active involvement of parents and the realisation of the importance of their education. This research has confirmed that Muslim females have been performing better than the South Asian males. Parents are open-minded and supportive. Much of the latter, however, can be attributed to the question of marriage for females, as they can attract partners who will reflect their own levels of education. The perceptions of some teachers towards Muslim girls, however, expressed the greatest concern in relation to the stereotyping of religions and genders.

It was the aim of this research to discover the ways in which the educational achievement of South Asians varied. To this end, a fundamentally qualitative study of South Asians addressed issues of social and educational class differences, and religion

and culture, in relation to South Asian educational achievement processes. It was found, given a large city such as Birmingham, with its tapestry of post war migration and industrial decline, that there are many South Asian groups entering an array of differing schools and colleges. Some of these educational institutions have taken in ethnic minority pupils since early periods and as a result have found ways to ameliorate the situations of disadvantaged South Asian groups, while at the same time providing every opportunity for South Asians that are equipped with the necessary cultural capital to proceed in education. The resolve and purpose of South Asian children and their parents have not relented over this period and the wish to achieve in education still remains strong for economic and social reasons, for all South Asians. Social class combined with the effects of schools provided the most decisive explanation for educational achievement.

9.4 Suggestions for further research

There are at least five significant areas of research that can be developed to improve knowledge further in this field.

First, it is important to explore a greater number of processes in education, in all settings and at all levels where South Asians are found to be significant. For example, it would include further elaboration of 'educational identity' as South Asians proceed, as well as exploring further the relationships of teachers and school with parents more closely.

Second, to extend the current study, a potentially useful suggestion would be to draw upon the experiences of other South Asians in other cities and locations across England. It will allow for an understanding of whether the findings of this study are merely peculiar to Birmingham or are applicable to other South Asians elsewhere in

England.

Third, a useful way in which to measure the educational performance of South Asians is to evaluate progression through education over a longer period, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For example, to pursue the relative progress of South Asian children at a relatively young age until they have left higher education and formally entered the world of work (i.e., between the ages of 7-21). It would provide an exhaustive composite picture and would potentially highlight further areas of difference between South Asian groups.

Fourth, a viable option may be to develop the current study at a comparative level. That is, by keeping to the same types of samples of sampled schools and colleges but increasing their size to include African-Caribbean and white groups. It would provide further knowledge on the ways in which South Asians differ, particularly in relation to other ethnic minority and white groups in education.

Finally, further research may wish to integrate the changing nature of the British educational system with the increased movement towards organisational efficiency. It needs to be associated with the concurrent economic and social realities of various South Asian groups across England. It is clear that in certain areas and cities, schools are applying constructive antiracist multicultural education policy to improve the experiences of ethnic minority groups in education. New research here would need to examine how teachers and schools utilise these positive methods elsewhere and to what effect.

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APPENDICES

<i>Appendix A</i>	School pupil questions
<i>Appendix B</i>	College student survey
<i>Appendix C</i>	Parent questions
<i>Appendix D</i>	Teacher questions
<i>Appendix E</i>	Teacher survey

Appendix A: School pupil questions

Introductory message to school pupils

“The purpose of this research is to determine the processes behind the educational achievement of South Asians in Birmingham. The information to do this is to come primarily from interviewing school pupils like you, your parents and your teachers.

As important aspect here is that you totally trust me and that you believe that I have no other motivations apart from those of determining the factors relating to South Asian education performance. No one else will hear what is said here today. I am only using the tape-recorder, essentially because it will allow me to use exactly what was said and the context in which it was said. There will be no recognisable connection made between you and what you have said. Total confidentiality is ensured.

[Ref:]

Name:

School:

Year:

Ethnicity:

Religion:

Gender:

[Tape recorder is switched on after checking again with the respondent whether it is acceptable to proceed]

Part A

1. Which primary school did you attend?
2. How long did it take to get you there?
3. Did you get on well with all your teachers there?
4. What percentage of the school would you say comprised of South Asians?
5. Which particular school activities did you take-up?
6. Which types of pupils did you mix well with?
7. Did you enjoy your time at primary school – does any moment stand out for you?
8. Did you sit the 11+ examination?
9. Did you want to go to grammar school yourself in particular or were you not bothered where you went?

10. What role did your parents at home play in you sitting the 11+ examination?
11. Did you get extra tutoring or practise sitting 11+ examination questions at home and who from?
12. Why did you choose to enter the secondary school that you are currently in?
13. What percentages of South Asians did you notice at the onset and how did you feel about this?
14. How far is this school away from your home?
15. Which sets were you placed in at the start of your secondary school and for which subjects?
16. Do you know what determined the sets you were placed in?
17. Do you agree with the setting you experienced?
18. Did you move up or down in any way?
19. How did your parents feel about this?
20. When you chose from your GCSE options, did you have your own long-term goals in choosing them or did you just choose your favourite subjects or those that you were good in, at the time?
21. What role did your parent play in the choices and how?
22. Did you ever feel that you had to keep them happy with the choices you had to make?
23. What kind of guidance did your teachers or career advisors give to you?
24. Was there ever a situation where your teacher or advisor said that you had to pick certain subjects or that you had to strictly do some subjects and not others?
25. With both teachers and advisors in mind, did you ever feel that you were getting less preferential treatment in comparison to your white colleagues?
26. Did you want to study more subjects?
27. Were there any subjects you studied outside of school?
28. Are you happy with the school and if so how would you recommend any changes to be made?
29. How do you get on with all your teachers at present?

30. What in your mind is a 'good teacher'? What would you consider to be the roles of your teachers and do you think that they fulfil them?
31. If you ever felt that your educational achievements were lacking would you ever blame your teacher and why?
32. Can you tell me of any situation where you might have thought a teacher was victimising you or even a friend?
33. Are there any South Asian or other ethnic minority teachers in this school?
34. How did you get on with them?
35. What difference do you feel that they have made?
36. Would you like to see more of them as a policy of the school?
37. Looking back as a whole, do you believe that prejudice/discrimination/racism has ever been a factor at your school, and if so do you think that the school ever did anything about it?
38. Do you think that the school adequately considers the diversity of South Asians that are in it?
39. Has dress code ever been a problem for you?
40. Have getting the right foods ever a problem for you?
41. How much leisure time do you have and how do you fill it?
42. What kind of 'other' activities take up your time in the home and how do these make you feel about them in relation to your educational commitments?
43. Would you say that the fact you are in a single-sexed or mixed school makes any difference to your educational performances and why?
44. Does it make any difference that you are a **South Asian** in a single-sexed or mixed school?
45. How do you think that your parents feel about you being in a single-sexed or mixed school environment?
46. How do you feel about your religion and your culture and how do you act towards it?
47. Do you think that your religion or your culture is in anyway a problem for you in your education at this school?
48. Have you ever attended supplementary schools to meet your religious training needs (i.e., Madrassas, Gurdwaras, Mandirs)?

49. How religiously active are your parents?
50. How do their influence your own religiosity?
51. Do you think that more about your own religion and culture should be taught in your school and why?
52. How do you think that your teachers perceive your religion and culture?
53. What language do your parents speak with you at home?
54. How well do your parents speak English with you?
55. Is your own first language competency comparable to your use of English?

Part B1 (For fifth form pupils)

56. How many GCSE subjects will you be taking and is it possible to tell me whether they will be higher, lower, or intermediate GCSE subjects?
57. Are you happy with this and if not, why not?
58. In the future, are you going to leave school and look for employment or will you be carrying on in sixth form or moving into further education?
59. If you stay in education, where are likely to go and what will you do?
60. How long is the intended course and what will it lead to?
61. If for any reason you did not obtain the required grades, what will you do and why?
62. Do you plan to go to university?
63. What are you likely to study once you get there?
64. Have your teachers told you anything of what to expect?
65. Have you been able to gather any information on universities from either family members or relatives?
66. Do you think that what you are doing now will be enough to get you to your desired university destination?
67. What kind of eventual employment would you like to obtain?
68. What kind of employment do you think that you will *actually* get?
69. How much do you think it will pay?

Part B2 (For sixth form pupils)

70. How many GCSE subjects did you take and what grades did you get?
71. Were you happy with your results and if not, why not?
72. Were they enough for what you wanted to do afterwards?
73. Where they better or worse than your teacher's expectations of them?
74. If your school has a sixth form, why did you/didn't you stay?
75. What course are you doing now?
76. What do you intend to do after this course is complete (i.e., employment or education])
77. If you remain in education, where are likely to go and what are you likely to do?
78. Do have particular universities in mind for higher education or degree subjects?
79. If for any reason you do not achieve the grades required what would be your likely course of action?
80. If you do not obtain the grades you wanted, why do you think it happened?
81. How have your parents influenced the kind of higher education choice that you have made?
82. Have your teachers informed you of what to expect?
83. What kind of eventual employment would you like to obtain?
84. What kind of employment do you think that you will actually get?
85. How much do you think it will pay?

Part C

86. What is your date of birth?
87. Where is your place of birth?
88. In which ward of Birmingham, do you live?
89. What do your parents do for a living and how long have they been doing this?
90. How supportive are your parents with your education?
91. How much personal space do you have at home?

92. Are your parents pleased with your education?
93. What kind of aspirations do they have for you?
94. Do they physically assist with schoolwork in any way?
95. What are the educational levels of your parents?

"Thank you for time."

Appendix B: College student survey

Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations

South Asian Educational Achievements

POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

To the student,

You have been randomly chosen from your further education college to take part in this study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to assist a research project into the processes behind the educational achievements of South Asians in colleges in Birmingham. All the information received is to be treated with the strictest of confidence.

All you need to do is to tick the relevant box or boxes for whichever you feel best matches your response. Alternatively, add personal commentary. When you are asked to list your responses in an order of merit, the number 1 denotes most likely. It is expected that it will take 30 minutes for you to complete the questionnaire. Your assistance with this research is important and we would appreciate your co-operation. Please use the reply-paid envelope provided for your convenience and return your completed questionnaire by Friday 20 December 1996.

A. Background Information

1. Which South Asian category best describes you?

	Please tick one box
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Indian	
Other: please specify	

2. What is your gender?

	Please tick one box
Male	
Female	

3. What would you say your faith is?

	Please tick one box
Muslim	
Sikh	
Hindu	
Other: Please specify	

B. Early Schooling

The following questions ask about your earlier years in schooling, with particular reference to your junior and infant years.

4. Can you ever remember attending a nursery?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
No	
Other: Please specify	

If not, please go to question 6.

5. How old were you when you started nursery?

	Please tick one box
2	
3	
4	
Other: Please specify	

6. Which Junior and Infant schools did you attend?

_____(Infant)

_____(Junior)

7. What types of schools were they?

	Please tick one box	Please tick one box
	Infant	Junior
Independent		
Roman Catholic		
LEA		
Other: Please specify		

8. How long did it take you to get there?

Please specify in minutes taken: -

_____Minutes

9. Which form of transport did you use?

	Please tick one box	Please tick one box
	Infants	Junior
Walking		
Car		
Bus		
Other: please specify		

10. How would you describe your time at Infant and Junior schools?

	Please tick one box	Please tick one box
	Infants	Junior
Very Enjoyable		
Reasonably Positive		
Good		
Fair		
Disagreeable		
Very Discouraging		
Other: Please Specify		

C. Transition to Secondary School

The following questions refer to your transition from infant and junior school to your secondary school.

11. Did you sit the 11+ for a grammar school or entrance tests for selective or independent schools?

	Please tick one box
Yes, For A Grammar School	
Yes, For An Independent School	
No, But I Wish I Did	
I Had No Idea Of Grammar Or Independent Schools Then	
I Absolutely Did Not Want To Attend A Grammar Or Selective School	
Other: Please Specify	

If you did not take any test, please go to Section C1, question 14.

12. If you did take a test, how motivated were your parents?

	Please tick one box
Highly Motivated	
Enthusiastic	
Mildly Concerned	
Did Not Care	
Other: Please Specify	

13. Did you receive any extra tutoring or practise at sitting these tests?

	Please tick one box
My Parents Arranged Outside Help From A Professional	
A Relative Helped Me (Please State Relationship)	
One Of My Brothers And Sisters Helped Me	
Other: Please Specify	

C1. Early Secondary Schooling

14. Which secondary school did you attend?

15. Which were the most important factors in your choice of secondary school?

	Place the following in relative order of merit (1 to 5)
Parents Strongly Encouraged	
Following Friends	
Nearness To Home	
Felt That 'It Was The Best'	
Merely Following Brothers And Sister Before Me	
Other: Please Specify	

16. What estimated percentage of South Asians did you notice at the start of your schooling and at the end?

	Please tick one box for start	Please tick one box for end
Less Than 25%		
26% - 50%		
51% - 75%		
More Than 75%		
Other: Please Specify		

17. How did these numbers make you feel?

	Please tick one box
Felt I Could Fit In	
Didn't Really Notice It	
The More South Asians The Better	
I Would Have Rather Mixed With Other Ethnic Groups As Well	
Other: Please Specify	

18. How did you travel to your secondary school?

	Please tick one box
Walking	
Car	
Bus	
Train	
Other: Please Specify	

19. How long did it take you to get there?

Please specify: -

_____ Minutes

20. Did you agree with the sets you were placed at school?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Completely	
Yes, But Not Entirely	
No, The Teachers Did Not Have Any Idea Of What I Was Really Capable Of	
No Way. I Was Much Brighter, If I Was Given A Chance I Would Have Proved Myself	
Didn't Really Care Where I Was	
Other: Please Specify	

21. How did your parents feel about this?

	Please tick one box
They Were Happy With It	
I Did Not Tell Them Until The School Reports Were Sent Home	
Didn't Bother Them One Bit In The Slightest	
They Were Really Upset And Wanted Me To Do Better	
Other: Please Specify	

22. Did you understand the consequences it had for you?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Teachers Made It Clear Right From The Start	
What Consequences?	
Absolutely Nothing Was Informed	
Other: Please Specify	

23. Did you ever move up or down, and how?

C2. GCSE Subject Options

The following questions ask about the choices you made for your GCSE subjects.

24. When you chose from your GCSE subjects, what kind of things were running around in your mind?

	List in order of merit (1 to 6)
Friends' Choices	
Parental Motivations	
Favourite Teachers	
Favourite Subjects	
Those Subjects That I Was Really Good At	
Long Term Career Goals	
Other: Please Specify	

25. Did you feel that you had to keep your parents happy with the subject choices that you made?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
No	
Other: Please Specify	

26. How would you describe the advice given to you by your teachers at this stage?

	Please tick one box
Very Useful	
Satisfactory	
Vague	
Useless	
No Advice Was Offered	
Other: Please Specify	

27. Was there a certain situation when you felt that the advice given to you by your teachers was different to that given to the white pupils?

	<i>Please tick one box</i>
Yes	
No	
Not Sure	
This Advice Was Bad Only Because I Was In A Lower Set	
Matters Were Fine Only Because I Was In A Higher Set	
Other: Please Specify	

28. Did you want to study more than the GCSE subjects allocated by the school?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
No	

If not, go to Section D, question 30.

29. If yes, did you do so?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
No	

D. Views on secondary schooling

Now that you have answered questions on how you approached your secondary schooling and how you selected certain subjects for your GCSEs, the following questions ask how you felt about your overall experience within secondary school.

30. Were you pleased with your school and did you feel that you were able to get the most out of your education there?

	Please tick one box
No, I Hated It. It Was Really Awfull	
I Would Have Achieved More At A Better School	
Yes, I Really Enjoyed Myself	
It Couldn't Have Been Beaten	
Other: Please Specify	

31. Did you get on well with all the teachers?

	Please tick one box
I Got On Really Well With All My Teachers	
There Were Some Teachers That Did Not Like Me For Some Reason	
I Got On Really Badly With Only One Or Two Teachers	
I Did Not Get On Well With The Vast Majority Of My Teachers	
Other: Please Specify	

32. If you felt your educational achievements were lacking in any way, did you ever blame your teachers?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Some Teachers Were Simply Not That Good	
No Way, I Would Only Blame Myself For Not Working Hard Enough	
Other: Please Specify	

33. Were there any non-white teachers in your school and, if so, how many?

There were _____ non-White teachers in my school

If there were no non-white teachers in your school, please go to question 36.

34. How did you get on with them?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Some Of Them Were Really Good	
We Only Had Non-White Teachers For Language Classes	
They Did Not Make Any Difference To How I Saw Teachers In General	
Some Of The Teachers Would Act And Behave Like Other White Teachers, So It Was Actually Off-Putting	
Other: Please Specify	

35. Looking back, as a whole, do you believe that teachers were prejudicial in your school and if so what form did it usually take? (Please tick one box in each column)

	Please tick one box for AGREE	Please tick one box for DISAGREE
I Believed That It Existed But It Was Kept Well Hidden		
The School Made Sure That No Racism Would Exist - If It Did, It Was Quickly Dealt With		
Racism Was Visibly Apparent Amongst The Teachers		
Some Of Teachers Were Really Discriminative		
In My Belief There Was No Racism Whatsoever		
Other: Please Specify		

36. Did the school attempt to serve the South Asian population within it by trying to promote a religious, cultural and linguistic emphasis?

	Please tick one box
The School Was Usually Very Good When It Came To Linguistic, Religious And Cultural Acceptance	
Anything They Did Was Because They Had To, Not Because They Wanted To	
The School Did Not Address It	
When In Britain, It Is Better To Be Like The White School Children In Order To Get On Easily	
Other: Please Specify	

37. Did you believe that the South Asian pupils were 'racist' against each other?

	Please tick one box
No, We All Stuck Together As South Asians	
Yes, But It Was Only Ever Adolescent Fun	
Yes, But Usually Amongst The Other Sex	
Other: Please Specify	

E. Your present situation

Some of the questions below ask about your school experiences, others ask also what you feel about your gender, culture, religion and by being an South Asian in Britain today.

38. What type of school did you attend?

	Please tick one box
Single-Sexed	
Mixed	

39. How many hours a weekly do you spend on any of the following?

	State numbers of hours a week
Sports (Outdoor And Indoor)	
Watching Videos, Satellite Or Cable TV At Home	
Going To Cinema	
Reading, Writing And Thinking	
Visiting Relatives	
Work (Part-Time And Full-Time)	
Housework	
Visiting Friends' Homes	
Other: Please Specify	

40. How do activities outside of school time affect your studies?

	Please tick one box
My Outside Activities Make Me More Aware	
The Education I Received And My Social And Leisure Time Were Never Ever A Point Of Conflict	
I Wish I Had More Time For My School Work	
Other: Please Specify	

41. How do you feel that your secondary education was affected by whether it was single-sex school or not?

	Please tick one box
I Went To A Single-Sex School And I Am Sure It Is One Real Reason Why My Educational Achievements Were That Much Better	
I Know That Single-Sex Schools Perform Better And Because Of That I Would Have Liked To Attend One	
I Believe It Is Important To Be In A Mixed School Because The World Out There Is Mixed	
It Only Makes A Small Difference. It Depends On You At The End Of The Day!	
Being Single Or Mixed-Sexed Makes No Difference At All	
Other: Please Specify	

42. How do you feel about your religion and how do you act towards it?

	Please tick one box
My Faith Is My Guiding Light!	
Being Religious Has Lots Of Advantages To It - But I Find That I Sometimes Don't Have The Time	
I Am Note Sure If I Really Understand It	
Religion Is A Waste Of Time	
I Follow Religion Because Of Parental Pressures	
Other: Please Specify	

43. Do you think that your particular religion has an overtly cultural feel to it?

	Please tick one box
Yes, And The Confusion Needs To Be Separated	
I Am Not Sure If I Understand The Difference	
No, My Religion Is Meant To Be Cultural	
Other: Please Specify	

44. Do you think that either your religion or cultures in any way have been a disadvantage to your studies at school or college?

	Please tick one box
Yes, I Find Real Difficulty In Completing All The Work That I Want To Get Done	
Yes, Culture Is, But Not Religion	
No, But I Can See Why It Would Be A Problem With Other South Asian Groups	
No, But It Has Been An Issue In The Past. I Had To Work Hard In Order To Create The Right Balance	
No, I Have Never Experienced Any Difficulties Of Any Kind	
Other: Please Specify	

45. Do/did you attend supplementary schools (i.e., Mosque, Gurdwara or Mandir) to meet your religious needs?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
No	
I Did Not Before But I Will Do Soon	
Other: Please Specify	

If not, please go to question 48.

46. If you did, how did you find it?

	Please tick one box
A Complete Waste Of Time	
I Found It Really Useful	
I Could Not Get To Grips With It	
I Would Have Learnt More Somewhere Else	
Other: Please Specify	

47. Did you go out of your own will or not?

	Please tick one box
My Parents Made Me Go	
I Had To Go Because It Was Expected	
I Wanted To Go Myself	
Other: Please Specify	

48. Would you say that your parents are religious?

	Mother Please tick one box	Father Please tick one box
Very Much So		
Not All The Intensely		
They Believe, But They Do Not Practise It Always		
Not At All		
Other: Please Specify		

49. Do you feel that more religion and culture should have been taught at your school?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Of Course.	
No, Religion And Culture Should Not Be Taught At Schools	
No, I Would Have Learnt More Outside Of School	
Other: Please Specify	

50. When you were taught the various religions how would say that your teachers saw your religion?

	Please tick one box
Honest And To The Point	
Fair But Limiting	
They Were Stereotypical	
Very Negatively	
Other: Please Specify	

F. Your Educational Achievements

This section explores the grades you received at GCSE and your educational plans for the future.

51. Please state the GCSEs you took and the grade and the year in which you took them.

Subject	Grade	Year	Subject	Grade	Year

52. Were these results higher or lower than your teachers' expectations of them?

	Please tick one box
Higher	
Lower	
About The Same	

53. Were these results higher or lower than your own expectations of them?

	Please tick one box
Higher	
Lower	
About The Same	

54. Were these results higher or lower than your parent's expectations of them?

	Please tick one box
Higher	
Lower	
About The Same	

55. Were the results enough for what you wanted to do afterwards?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Absolutely	
Just About	
No, Truly Not	

56. Did you want to carry on into sixth form study yourself or did you feel that you simply had to?

	Please tick one box
Yes, I Always Knew That I Had To Do It Because I Wanted To Get Into University	
My Parents Have Always Expected It As Part Of Their 'Big Plan'	
All My Friends Were Doing It, So I Did So Too	
Not Really, I Had To Right Grades So I Just Carried On	
Other: Please Specify	

57. Which course have you just completed?

	Please tick one box
A Levels	
A Levels Re-Sit	
GVNQ (State Which)	
Nvqs	
Other: Please Specify	

58. How has your sixth form study differed from your secondary school years?

	Please tick one box
More Freedom To Do As I Please	
I Have Had To Study Really Hard	
Looking Back, I Wish I Had Been Pushed A Little Further	
I Wanted To Be In A Mixed Environment For This Further Study	
It Has Been Quite Difficult Overall	
Other: Please Specify	

59. If there was a sixth form within your school, why didn't you go there?

	Please tick one box
Had Enough	
Didn't Believe That They Would Be Good Enough	
Wanted To Try Something Different	
Keen To Get Away From That Scene	
Staying Close To Friends	
There Was No Sixth Form In My School	
Other: Please Specify	

60. Did you ever consider the possibility of getting a job after your GCSEs?

	Please tick one box
No Way!	
There Are No Jobs	
Always Knew That I Would Be In Education After GCSE	
I Had No Choice In The Matter - My Parents Would Not Have Wanted It	
Other: Please Specify	

61. Which courses and subjects did you do at your college?

Course:
Subjects:

62. What are doing now?

	Please tick one box
At University	
Look For A Job	
Work In Family Business	
Get Onto Another Course At A College	
Sit At Home	
Other: Please Specify	

If you are not at university this year, please go to question 72.

63. Which universities were your first three choices? What degrees were you going to be taking and what offer did the universities or colleges make?

University	Subject	Degree	Offer made

64. Why did you choose these university degree subjects? (Please list in order of merit - 1 indicating the most preferred answer and 5 indicating the least)

	Please tick one box
Parents Wishes	
I Would Make Lots Of Money When I Finish	
I Am Really Keen To Know More About This Field	
It Is Where I Want My Career To Lay	
No Idea What-So-Ever	
Other: Please Specify	

65. Did you always feel that you would ultimately be going to university?

	Please tick one box
Yes	
The School That I Went To Before Instilled It Into Me	
I Only Recently Decided	
Not Really	
Other: Please Specify	

66. When did you decide this and what made you want to? (Expanding on the previous question)

67. Why did you select these universities?

	Please tick one box
Because They Were The Best In The Country For My Chosen Area	
I Choose The Location, Not The University	
I Heard That They Would Be Good From Others Who Are/Went There	
Easy To Get Into	
Close To Home	
My Parents Wanted Me To Go To This University	
Other: Please Specify	

68. Where are you staying?

	Please tick one box
At Home	
University Halls Of Residence	
Staying In A House With Others	
Staying With Relatives In Another City	
Other: Please Specify	

69. If you, for any reason, achieved lesser grades than you anticipated for your first choice, what will you be/are you doing?

	Please tick one box
Re-Sitting Course Again	
I Found Something Useful Through Clearing	
Look/Ed For A Suitable Job Instead	
Not Sure	
Other: Please Specify	

70. If you did not make the grades, why do you think that was? (Place in order of merit where the number 1 is the most important reason and 5 the least important factor)

	Place in order of merit (1 to 5)
Bad Teaching	
Negative Advice From Teachers	
I Did Not Revise As Hard As I Would Have Needed To	
I Lacked Regime And Discipline During The Main Of The Studies	
Too Many Pressures At Home	
Other: Please Specify	

71. Do you feel that what you did was enough for your desired university place?

	Please tick one box
Yes, Absolutely	
It Should Be	
If I Am Lucky	
Hardly!	

72. What are the grades for each of the subjects you recently took?

73. Can you describe your feelings on them?

74. What kind of job do you actually wish to have, and what type of job do you actually think you will get?

	Wish: please tick one box	Actually get: please tick one box
Medical And Pharmaceutical		
Law And Legal Work		
Business And Management		
Computing, Science Or Technology		
Local Government		
Media And Journalism		
Education And Teaching		
Driving		
Clerical, Secretarial And Administrative		
Tools, Machinery Or Automotive		
Other: Please Specify		

75. How has your choice been affected?

	Please tick one box
I Am Only Following My Parents Orders	
My Parents Told Me That I Can Do Whatever I Want As Long As I Am Happy	
A Mixture Of Parental Advice And My Points Of View	
I Think My Choice Will Make Quite Wealthy One Day	
I Have No Idea Why I Am Want To Do This	
Other: Please Specify	

G. Personal data

The following questions refer to personal information. The questions also ask about how you relate/d to your parents and how they have affected your overall education.

76. What is your date of Birth? ____ / ____ / 19 ____

77. Where were you born?

	Please tick one box
Birmingham	
Outside Of Birmingham, But In Britain	
Overseas: Please Specify	

78. Which ward area (or the nearest) did/do you live in? (e.g., Small Heath)

79. What do your parents do for a living?

	Father	Mother
Full-Time Employed		
Part-Time Employed		
Unemployed		
Retired		
Self-Employed		
Other: Please Specify		

80. If employed, what are your parents' jobs? (If your parents are retired or unemployed what did they do before)

_____ (Father)

_____ (Mother)

81. Which language do your parents speak most with you at home? (Please indicate two by putting a circle around each of them)

Pushto	Mirpuri/Patwari (Azad Kashmiri)
English	Other Kashmiri
Hindi	Bangali (Sylheti)
Urdu	Punjabi (Indian)
Sindi	Gujerati
Blauchi	Punjabi (Pakistani)

82. How would you compare your competency in the use of English to the language or dialect spoken to you by your parents?

	Please tick one box
My English Is Much Better	
I Am Happier In My Parents Language	
I Am Really Weak In My Parents Language Or Dialect	
I Can Use Both Equally Well	

83. How would you compare your parents' use of English to their first language, as stated above?

	Please tick one box (Mother)	Please tick one box (Father)
Both Are Good		
English Is Fairer		
English Is Much Worse		
Hardly Speak English		

84. When did your parents originally arrive in Britain?

	Mother Please tick one box	Father Please tick one box
1950 – 1955		
1956 – 1960		
1961 – 1965		
1966 – 1970		
1971 – 1975		
1976 – 1980		
1981 – 1985		
Not Known		
Other: Please Specify		

85. How old were your parents when they originally arrived?

	Mother Please tick one box	Father Please tick one box
Less than 15		
16 – 20		
21 – 25		
26 – 30		
31 – 40		
More than 40		
Not known		

86. How many bedrooms are there in your home?

Please specify: - _____

87. How many people live in your home?

Please specify: - _____

88. Are your parents particularly supportive with your education?

	Please tick one box
There Is No Doubt About It	
Yes, But They Are Not In A Position To Help	
They Don't Really Care	
They Have Little Idea How The Education System Works	
Other: Please Specify	

Appendix C: Parent questions

“Can I take this opportunity to reassure that you what you are about to say to me is in the strictest of confidence. The essential aim of the exercise is to explore aspects of your children’s schooling to discover your attitudes and values towards a range of parameters that are thought to affect the education of your child(ren). The reason for the tape recorder is to assist me in my analysis. Any information used will be completely anonymised.

[Ref:]

Name:

Ethnicity:

Religion:

Gender:

Thank you for agreeing to take part. May I switch on the tape recorder now”.

A. Early schooling

1. What can you tell me about the very early education of your child(ren)?
2. On what basis did you select nursery/infant/primary schools?
3. Did you ever think about private sector early education, and if so why?
4. What was your role in your child(ren)’s preparation for the 11+ examination?
5. Did you use outside tutors to boost your child(ren)’s chances of success?
6. Why did you think, if so, that education in independent or grammar schools would be that much better for your child(ren)?
7. What ultimately led to the choice of your child(ren)’s secondary school?
8. How did distances away from home and the gender of the school affect your decisions?

B. Selective Schooling (where relevant)

9. What have been the advantages to you and your child(ren) in relation to their education in independent or grammar schools?
10. How easy or difficult was the transition for your child(ren)?
11. What kind of obvious changes did you see in your child(ren)?
12. How do you get on with the school and the teachers?

C. Secondary School Development

13. How important is it that your child(ren) are in a single-sex school?
14. How do you get on with the school and the teachers?
15. Are you happy with the content of religion in your child(ren)'s curriculum?
16. Do you regularly attend parent's evenings and do you find them informative?
17. How have you affected your children's GCSE subject choices?
18. How important do you believe they actually are?
19. What A level subjects do/did you have in mind?
20. What further or higher educational expectations do you have for your child(ren)?
21. Do you have any universities in mind; are they close to home or far away; and what about subjects?

D. Responsibility for Educational achievement: parents or schools

22. Ultimately, who do you think is responsible for educational achievement; the school and its teachers or the parents?
23. What about individuals teachers, did you have experience of 'bad' or 'racist' teachers in relation to your child(ren)?
24. How hard do push them in education yourself(ves)?
25. Which local factors affect the education of your child(ren)?

E. Role of Religion and Culture

26. How do you think that your religion and culture affect the nature of your child(ren)'s education?
27. How do you think that their education is affected by supplementary schools (i.e., Mosques, Gurdwaras and Mandirs)?
28. What can you tell about language use within the home; is it dominated by the mother tongue or is English used as much or more?

F. Personal Information

29. What is the level of you and your wife's education?
30. How many people live in the household?

31. How long have you been in this country?

[Sampled parents] "Thank you for your time.

[Snowballed parents] "If you are able to provide the names of and contact details of up to three other parents for this study, I would be most grateful.

Appendix D: Teacher questions

"Thank you for arranging to see me. I want to talk to you about the educational achievement of South Asians in your school/college. Please rest assured that the information you provide me would be used for the purposes of this research only. Anything that is used in the research will be totally annonymised.

[Ref:]

Name:
School:
Ethnicity:
Religion:
Gender:

"Do I have permission to use this tape-recorder and can I proceed?"

A. Entry Strategies

1. What can you tell me about the nature of South Asians as they enter your secondary school/college?
2. How prepared or unprepared are they?
3. What distinguishes them from other pupils in the school?
4. What can you say about their general attitude and behaviour?
5. How would you rate their competency in the use of English?
6. What issues become immediately apparent, as the South Asians enter?
7. What differences do you notice between the three South Asian groups (i.e., Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani)?
8. What differences do notice in terms of gender?
9. What can you say about how South Asians relate to other non-South Asian pupils?

B. Secondary School Development

10. How does the education of South Asian pupils develop through the education system?
11. What is the school policy on setting?
12. Have the performances of South Asians changed over the years in this school?
13. What factors account for the educational achievement and the underachievement of South Asian groups and genders?

C. Teacher Roles and Expectations

14. How do you interact with South Asian parents?
15. How do you find them attending parents' evenings?
16. How supportive are South Asian parents and how effective are they with that support?
17. What do South Asian parents need to do improve their child(ren)'s chances in education?
18. How do you think that you are able to help South Asians through their education; directly and indirectly?
19. What kind of antiracist multicultural education policy does the school have in place and to what effect? (i.e., bilingualism, recruitment of South Asian teachers, cultural days).
20. How do you think South Asian religion and culture affects pupils in their education?

D. Exit Strategies and Higher Education

21. What kind of further and higher education options do South Asians tend to consider?
22. What kinds of variations appear between South Asian groups and genders?
23. Is there a preference for certain genders or South Asian groups to opt for one course or type of institutions in comparison to others?
24. What role do you think parents play here?
25. What can you say about future trends?

[Sampled school/college teachers] "Thank you for your time. A short survey will be sent around the school. I would be most thankful if you would take a few minutes or so to fill in the questionnaire. It will assist this research greatly.

[Snowballed teachers] "Thank you your time, you have been very open. Can you please suggest other teachers from similar schools in the area that might feel an interest in taking part in this research. I would be most grateful if you are able to provide contact names and details.

Education of South Asians in Birmingham

A Survey of Teachers

Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations
University of Warwick
Coventry
CV4 7AL

The following questionnaire is for teachers in all capacities. It asks you provide your views and opinions in relation to questions concerning the educational achievements of Asians. It is anticipated that the survey will take 10-20 minutes of your time. Your assistance in this project is extremely important. It is part of a wider Birmingham-based research project, based at the Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements made. Please tick only one of the boxes associated with each statement.

Although schools may be single-sex origin, it is nevertheless important that all the questions are answered, as wider perspectives concerning all aspects of Asians in education are explored.

Survey responses are treated with the strictest of confidence. In report writing, all references to the school/college and teachers are anonymised.

Please ensure that you return your completed questionnaire to the relevant teacher by April 1999.

Thank you.

A. Educational Achievement by Gender

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Asian Girls Perform Better Than Boys					
Indian Girls Perform Best Of All					
Pakistani And Bangladeshi Girls Will Be Removed From School At The Age Of 16					
Fathers Are More Restrictive With Girls And Less With Boys					
Pakistani Boys Perform Worst Of All					

B. Performance by Religious and Ethnic Group

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Hindu Children Perform Best Of All					
Muslim Children Perform Least Of All					
Bangladeshis Perform Less Than Pakistanis					
Indian Children Perform Best Of All					
Ultimate Performance Is Not A Factor Of Ethnicity, But Of The Ability Of The School/College And Its Teachers					

C. The Roles of South Asian Parents

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All Asian Parents Are Motivated For Their Children					
Asian Parents Put Too Much Pressure On Their Children					
Asian Parents Never Attend Parent's Evenings					
Asian Parents Do Not Speak Enough English With Their Children					
Asian Parents Make It More Difficult For Their Daughters Than Sons					
Asian Parents Are Quick To Criticise Teachers					
Asian Parents Are Less Likely To Get Involved Directly With The School					
Asian Parents Are Overly Susceptive Of White Teachers					
Asian Parents Expect More From The School Than White Parents Do					

D. Supplementary Schools

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
After Hours Religious And Linguistic Teaching Is Negative For Children					
Asian Parents Place More Emphasis On Supplementary Schools Than Mainstream Schools					
Supplementary Schools Are Enriching For Children					

E. Subject Selection

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Asian Pupils And Students Strongly Favour Science Subjects					
Parents Determine All The Important Subject Selections					
Would Be Deterred From Encouraging A Pupil/Student To Select A Subject If They Were Thought Inept					
Very Few Asian Children Will Study Humanities Subjects After GCSE					

F. Role of Religion and Culture

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The Domestic Situations Of All Asians Are Problematic For Effective Schooling					
Muslim Pupils Are Far More Likely To Be Religious Than Sikhs And Hindus					
Muslim Pupils/Students Are More Confused About Their Identity					
Pupil Religion And Culture Ought To Be Left At Home					
Islam Is A Particularly Dogmatic Religion					
Sikh And Hindu Groups Are Less Demanding Than Muslims					
We Should Respect All Religions For Their Intrinsic Values					

G. Policies of the School

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
The School/College Tries To Encourage The Understanding Of All Cultures And Religions					
I Believe That Matters Of 'Race' In School Are Most Important In A Pluralist Society					
Reducing Inequalities Of Achievement Is A Significant Policy Of The School/College					
It Is Always Important To Help Disadvantaged Groups In Education					
Problems Of Inequality Are To Do With Pupils And Parents Rather Than Teachers					

H. The Future

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
As The Numbers Of Asians Increase In School, So Will Our Problems					
I Think Asian Children Are Increasingly Going To Be A Problem For Schools To Deal With					
It Is Important That We Recruit More Ethnic Minority Teachers Into The Profession					
We Have To Work Hard To Ensure That Inequalities Do Not Remain In The Future					

I. Personal Details

1. Age:

	Please tick one box
21 – 24	
25 – 29	
30 – 34	
35 – 39	
40 – 44	
45 – 49	
49 – 59	
59 +	

2. Position: -

	Please tick one box
Head	
Deputy Head	
Senior Teacher	
Classroom Teacher	
Junior Teacher	
Assistant Teacher	
Other: Please Specify	

3. Gender: -

	Please tick one box
Male	
Female	

4. Ethnicity: -

	Please tick one box
White	
White-European	
Black-Caribbean	
Black-African	
Pakistani	
Indian	
Bangladeshi	
Other: please specify	

5. Length of current stay (in years): -

	Please tick one box
0 – 4	
5 – 9	
10 – 14	
15 – 19	
20 – 24	
25 – 29	
30 – 34	
35 – 39	
40 +	

Thank you for your co-operation. Your assistance in this study is appreciated. Please return the completed questionnaire to the relevant teacher.